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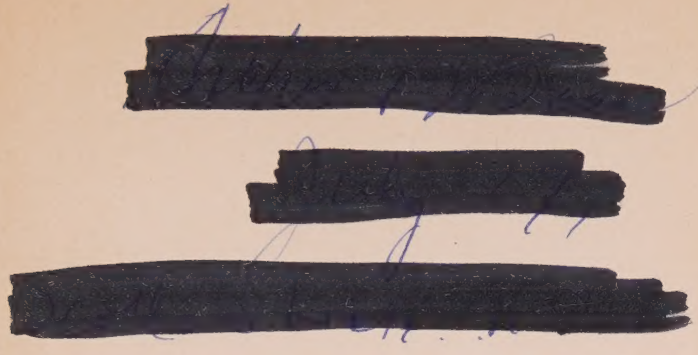

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THE SPIRIT OF JESUS IN ST. PAUL

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THE SPIRIT OF JESUS IN ST. PAUL

A STUDY IN THE SOUL OF ST. PAUL BASED UPON THE CORINTHIAN LETTERS

BY

W. W. BRYDEN, M.A.

WOODVILLE, ONT., CANADA

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

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NEW COLLEGE, EDINBURGH

AND A FOREWORD BY

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UNITED FREE CHURCH COLLEGE, GLASGOW

NEW YORK: GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

LONDON: JAMES CLARKE & CO., LIMITED

TO

MY MOTHER

AND FATHER

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

One of the interesting tendencies of modern New Testament scholarship is an increasing recognition of the essential solidarity of the apostle Paul with the primitive Christianity out of which he sprang, and of which he is the most distinguished representative. It is no longer possible to draw an absolute line between the apostle and the primitive Church, nor can the theology of St. Paul, even in its most characteristic developments, be regarded other than as the working out of ideas and motives already present and operative in the Christian soul.

Paulinism is built perpendicularly upon historic Christian foundations, nor can we estimate *a priori* the extent to which the ethical and emotional content of the system has been quarried from the primitive Christian experience. Our records of the latter are, apart from St. Paul, extremely meagre. On the other hand, St. Paul's identification of the Spirit with the Lord seems to guarantee the essential oneness of his teaching with the general historic witness of the Church of his time.

It is one of the merits of Mr. Bryden's book that he brings this out, and that he offers an analysis of the Pauline teaching which is in close and helpful relation both to religious experience and to practical

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Introductory Note

[redacted]ood wine needs no bush, and it is really superfluous to write an Introduction to a book which will abundantly justify itself. The motive of this notice must be sought rather in another direction. Mr. Bryden is a young Canadian theologian whose attainments, while recognized in his own community, have not hitherto asserted themselves in any appeal to a more general audience. Now that he makes this wider appeal, his friends would bespeak for him a friendly welcome.

W. Manson.

New College,
Edinburgh,
Oct. 9th, 1925.

FOREWORD

There is much Biblical study that does not go to the root of the matter. Never has that ancient civilization, within which Biblical literature is set, been more assiduously explored than to-day. Its social life, its political inter-relations, its religious ritual, are understood as never before. Archæology, philology, historical and literary criticism have rendered immensely valuable service to the interpretation of the Bible. But more is needed than that. At best that is just to look upon the outward appearance, while no one can be an adequate interpreter of the Bible who has not looked upon its heart ; and the heart of it is religious experience. Only one who has penetrated to that experience and, in his own measure, shared it, can deal with the Bible in any really vital way.

That is why every living interpretation of its great personalities is a contribution to religion no less than to Biblical science, and why Mr. Bryden's study of Paul ought to be widely welcomed. Important and even indispensable as historical studies are, psychological studies bring us nearer the centre. What most of all interests Mr. Bryden is the character of Paul, as that character was moulded and controlled by the spirit of Jesus. Yet the discussion is conducted in no merely speculative interest. Throughout it runs an undercurrent of appeal to the Christian minister to-day

to search and try himself by the standards exhibited in that first and greatest of Christian ministers, and, amid all the chequered experiences incidental to a faithful ministry, it is a summons to the perennial Source of refreshment and renewal.

This is a pre-eminently thoughtful book, obviously written out of a ripe Christian experience, intense in its sincerity, and forcing its readers back upon ultimate things in themselves, their work, and their faith—a book that will help them to a deeper understanding not only of Paul but of themselves ; and I have pleasure in commending this literary first-fruits of my old Canadian pupil.

JOHN E. MCFADYEN.

United Free Church College,
Glasgow.

AUTHOR'S ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I desire to acknowledge the help and encouragement received from Professor Manson, then of Knox College, Toronto, now of New College, Edinburgh, in the preparation of this book, also for suggestions in literary construction from Rev. N. A. McEachern, of Toronto, and my deep indebtedness to Professor J. E. McFadyen, of the United Free Church College, Glasgow, for kindness in reading the proofs, preparing the Index, and for many other reasons.

WALTER W. BRYDEN.

Woodville, Ontario,
September, 1925.

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PART I

THE PROBLEM STATED

CHAPTER I

Introductory

The Pauline Conception of the Spirit of Christ

It is my desire in the very beginning of this treatise on Paul to call the reader's attention to the fact that in our modern use of the term the "Spirit of Jesus" or the "Spirit of Christ," we understand it in a somewnat different sense from that in which Paul or the early Church understood it. At least we seem to have decidedly changed the place of emphasis in the rich and varied meaning the expression conveys.

I take it that when we are thinking of the "Spirit of Christ" we have in mind chiefly certain ethical and spiritual qualities of the mind and soul of Jesus which He exhibited in the days of His flesh in His associations with men, His fellowship with God and His disposition to life and its values in general. We believe that we may possess this mind and spirit of Jesus Christ and we encourage ourselves and persuade others to lay hold of it.

Now these qualities of life are not absent from the Epistles of Paul, as I shall endeavour to show by his own words, feelings and actions, in dealing with the Corinthian Christians; but when Paul uses that term or some equivalent he is not thinking so much of qualities of heart and mind as of a

Power or a Presence in the world and in men's hearts which effects or creates these other things. He is not thinking of results, but causes.

We cannot read the Epistles of Paul, or indeed the New Testament, impartially—unprejudiced by modern conceptions and modes of thinking—without concluding that there was an indefinable something, designated by many names and described by varied terminology, which the members of the Church in the first century considered and agreed to be the creative power of their membership. Paul called it the law of the Spirit telling of Life (Rom. viii, 2), Life (Gal. ii, 20-21), the Holy Ghost (Rom. v, 5, etc.), the Spirit (Rom. viii, 5), the Spirit of God (Rom. viii, 9, 2 Cor. iii, 3), the Spirit of Christ (Rom. viii, 9), and he at times seems to identify the Spirit with the Risen Lord. "The Lord," he says, "is that Spirit" (2 Cor. iii, 17), and the Power of the Resurrection (Rom. vi, 4-5, Phil. iii, 10). This was some power working to the transforming of men's character, the same power strangely enough which was instrumental in raising Jesus' body from the dead (Rom. viii, 11-14), and the source of it all was the Glorified and Risen Christ whose Spirit was with them and in them.

This is what they pre-eminently meant when they spoke of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. How that Spirit operated on the lives of men we are not told. It is possible, and indeed probable, that even the Apostle Paul, and certainly the majority of the members of the Church, conceived the mode of its operation after the prevalent psychological

conceptions of that age. They all believed (Paul included) in the reality of demons, spirits, devils and lords in supramundane places which could work on the souls of human beings probably in some semi-physical or magical way. They did not stop to consider if the " Spirit of Jesus " worked differently. They were overwhelmingly interested in its strangely wonderful beneficent power in the lives of those who gave themselves up to it.

This conviction of another Presence, or this experience of an additional quality or power in their life, is the most remarkable phenomenon to be discovered in the literature of the early Church. To my mind it was this which was chiefly responsible for the Church's creation, continuance and permanence. We have been accustomed to think in these latter years that some one of the following considerations was sufficient cause for the creation of the Christian Church ; although, at the same time, a shrewder and more discerning analysis of the facts is making us much less confident of easy, rational solutions of its early beginnings.

First.—*The high character of the teachings and the superior ethics of Jesus, germinating and ripening on a soil only too ready to receive such, has been given as the reason for the rise and continuance of this new religion.*

It is true that in that decaying world, reeking with filth in places high and low, earnest souls must have been seeking of themselves a higher basis for morality, a new and more satisfactory rule of faith and conduct. And we know now that there were many " God Fearers " who often formed

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the nucleus of Gentile Churches, men and women who had allied themselves in some way to the Jewish faith as the highest religious expression they could find, but who reserved the right, even there, to decide that which was of real importance, namely, its unique monotheism and high conception of righteousness and morality, and who accepted with loyalty these tenets of the Jewish religion as an expression of their sincere faith, dismissing the rest which they considered as immaterial accretions.[1]

This is very significant and reveals the anxious sincerity of the age and its discernment; but, far from providing any satisfactory solution of the quick and sudden rise of Christianity, it rather complicates the difficulty. It would be a question worth investigating whether there is evidence anywhere, or indeed *could be*, of any real, widespread appreciation and understanding of the wonderful and peculiar teachings of Jesus in the years in which He lived and in many decades subsequent to that time. In fact, a close reading of the Acts and the Epistles would incline one to believe that their growing ethical conceptions and Christian wisdom were due rather to what might be termed the illumination of the Spirit than to the specific teachings of Jesus Himself. And we ourselves are witnesses to the fact that it has taken time, tremendous experience, yes, history to disclose to us the unique value of the teachings of Jesus Christ. Only to-day, it would seem, in the midst

[1] *vide* Schürer, *The Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ*, Second Division, Vol. II, pages 291-327, especially p. 314.

of circumstances too bewilderingly great for us, are we for the first time tempted to acknowledge the tremendous challenge of Jesus' ethics, tempted to recognize that their seeming impracticability in the larger spheres of social, national, as well as individual life may be that one venture of faith to which Jesus' superlative life and promises would have committed men ; and our undertaking such may prove the only solution of the baffling problems which exercise us.

Secondly.—*The personal devotion, admiration and attachment of the disciples to the person of Jesus has also been considered a cause for the origin of the Church.*

The impression from His life, lived as it was in intimate association with them, we must allow, could not but have profoundly affected these men. Living impressions constitute the strongest influence one personality may have upon another, stronger than words and even deeds. We have evidence that this was particularly true of Jesus. It was Jesus' authority, His possession of an extraordinary personal power over their lives, which made them ponder. Notwithstanding, impressions are among the most difficult things in the world to transfer, to convey to others who have not been under their direct influence. The only picture we have of the men and women of that time—that given in the Gospels and the Acts—is conclusive proof that there was neither strength nor courage in their hearts, nor the faintest idea or intention on their part of doing what they came eventually to do. The Book of Acts affirms that the early Christians were baptized with the Spirit ; and the

leaders themselves, after this, give evidence of acting like new and different men. Nevertheless, they never seem to have had clear plans or a definite programme for their work. Circumstances often untoward, events which more often frustrated than aided them, and accidents of fortune seem to have discovered to them and determined their way.

THIRDLY.—*Some affirm that the "resurrection appearances" were sufficient cause for the subsequent happenings.*

It is the conviction of the writer that these appearances, however well authenticated and substantiated, however arresting and necessary to the despairing men and women who seem to have shared their privilege, did not and could not bring into being the life we have in the early Christian Church. Physical, semi-physical or other objective demonstrations of certain Christian beliefs and desires are not of a nature in themselves to produce the faith and confidence which we know as Christian. There is something eternally true, define it how we will, in Paul's claim that the things of the Spirit of God are spiritually discerned. The prime doctrine of the earliest Christian Church, it is true, was the resurrection of Jesus; but that doctrine, as preached by Paul at least, was something more than the mere fact that reliable men affirmed with all sincerity that they had seen Jesus after He was known to be crucified, dead and buried. The most we may claim that the resurrection appearances did for the disciples, was to give them an attitude of mind which was receptive to other more powerful agencies. The doctrine of the meaning

of the Cross was partly the result of the searching of the Scriptures, as evidenced in Acts and in Paul, by which certain conclusions were reached ; but it was undoubtedly also the result of illumined minds and spiritually enriched souls. Not the profound nature of the teachings of Jesus, nor the strange impression which His earthly life made upon men, nor any external authority such as the essential truthfulness of Christ's appearing to men after death, or vindication from Scripture, or those words of Jesus which might have prepared them to expect these things, are in themselves sufficient basis to account for the origin and the continuance of the Christian Church.

The fact that the Christian religion as no other meets the human soul in its intimately human longings is probably the best attempt which has been made to explain the Church's rise and its tenacious life ; but unfortunately here again, as in the case of Jesus' ethics, we have come to a realization of Christianity's fitness to do this through the education of great historic and personal experiences ; and accordingly such a reason can scarcely be offered as a cause of the Church's origin. Dr. Glover makes two striking observations in his " Conflict of Religions in the Roman Empire " (pages 150 and 152). " Paul," he says, " trusted everything to what we might call the Christian instinct and what he called the Holy Spirit, and he was justified. No force in the world has done so much as this ' nameless thing ' that has controlled and guided and illumined—whatever we call it."

And again, "That Christianity retained its own character in the face of the most desperate efforts of its friends to turn it into a philosophy congenial to the philosophies of the day was the result of the strong hold it had taken upon innumerable simple folk who had found in it the power of God in the transformation of their own characters and instincts, and who clung to Jesus Christ—to the great objective facts of His incarnation and His death upon the Cross—as firm foundations laid in the rock against which the floods of theory might beat in vain." The Christian's authority lay in an experience, a new life which he was beginning to be able to live, and which though difficult he felt impelled to pursue. These people believed that they were still being taught and led by the Spirit of the Living Christ. Something of this meaning may be attached to those much discussed words of Paul in 2 Corinthians v, 16: "Yea though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more. Therefore, if any man be in Christ, it is a new creation."

And in Paul's great passage on immortality (1 Corinthians xv), he himself rises from just such arguments as we have been considering (in an endeavour to demonstrate a belief in their resurrection because of Christ's) to this apparently attested fact of experience (1 Corinthians xv, 45): "And so it is written, the first man Adam was made a living soul: but the last Adam a 'quickening' spirit."

It would appear that there was working in the early days of the Church a Power of God which

cannot be made to coalesce with any or all of the combined agencies so readily given us as explanations of its origin ; and this the early Christians attributed to the Spirit or the Presence of the Living Lord in their midst.

CHAPTER II

Corinth and Its People

The people of Corinth were a peculiar people. No other Church with which Paul had to deal presented difficulties so varied in kind and obstinately perplexing. So much is this the case that every faculty of mind and soul which Paul possessed was exercised to the utmost in his differences with them. The situation in Corinth during the time these letters were written approaches the tragic for the sensitive soul of the great apostle. Those who have been closely connected with Church life may know something of the inner meaning of an estrangement between a congregation and its leader. I wonder if there was ever a more trying instance than this which occurred in the ministry of the greatest Christian leader in the infant days of the Church's history. At any rate, in the course of Paul's dealing with these Corinthians, we have reflected those peculiar features of character, striking ethical and spiritual qualities of heart and mind, which we may presume to designate the Spirit of Jesus as we like to understand it in these modern times. Of course, we find this supremely in Paul himself, but eventually, I am persuaded, in the Corinthian Christians also.

To make the real difficulties which existed

between Paul and these people apparent, let us briefly recall the conditions of life, and endeavour to feel into the atmosphere of the city of Corinth itself. At the time of Paul this city was in many respects the greatest in Greece. Situated on the narrow isthmus connecting the Province of Achaia with Greece proper, it had its harbours Kenchreae and Lechaeum on that which was probably the directest and safest trade and travel route between Rome and the great East. Because of this most favourable position, and the interest taken in the city by the Roman authorities, it became a highly privileged centre of commercial activity in the Mediterranean world. Peoples of every nation were gathered together in Corinth. The ancient city, wealthy and luxurious Corinth as it was known, had been destroyed in B.C. 146. After a century in ruin it was rebuilt and established as a Roman military colony and commerical centre by Julius Caesar himself, and soon reassumed its notorious importance as the city of splendour, wealth and luxury, with the attendant vices of strained liberality of thought and conduct.

Every reciprocal exchange of thought from east to west and west to east passed through Corinth, and, of course, had its influence on the mind and aspiration of its people. Without any common bond of religion or custom (the crystallization of communal or historic traditions which served as the best safeguard against too extreme tendencies in other cities) the Corinthian found himself seeking where he would and finding what he pleased. "You have ancient democracy here in

full bloom." The Jew turned to the synagogue for his religious guidance, the Egyptian found his at the Temple of Isis, while the Phrygian worshipped in the sanctuary of the " Mother of Gods." The religion which had most attracted and was really identified in a special way with the city was that associated with the Temple of Aphrodite with its world-famous cult of Unchastity.[1] Impurity itself was evidently considered a necessary element in the development of a full-blooded religious life.

There were, besides, striking contrasts in the social status of its people. The Roman officials, civil and military, together with resident Romans drawn there for commercial purposes, would constitute a kind of local aristocracy. The large Greek population under conditions such as favoured them in this city would naturally divide itself into two classes ; the very rich who had made good use of the city's commercial advantages—many of these would be newly rich—and the very poor seafaring folk, especially the labourers employed in the transportation of goods from one port to the other, all of whom, living more or less from hand to mouth, were ready to seize any opportunity to put themselves on a level with their more fortunate kinsmen.

I imagine that the other nationalities represented in this cosmopolitan population would be, generally

[1] The International Critical Commentary (Corinthians), Introduction, p. xiii, " is not certain that this worship of Aphrodite had been revived in all its former monstrosity in the new city," nevertheless, its presence seems to have been sufficiently pronounced to make it a vital factor in the religious tendencies of the later developments.

speaking, fairly well-off and in a position to take advantage of the good fortune of the city itself, although there is strong evidence that the slave class was very numerous and belonged to different nationalities. It is to be noted also that among this slave class there was a spirit of independence and inquiry not belonging to such classes in cities where tradition and authority were more respected. The flowery rhetoricians, sophists and cynics expounded their half-baked knowledge to every class so long as they made a good living out of it.

There is an apparent unreality about the whole life—and this applies to teachers as well as to those who were only too ready to be taught—" a kind of assumed knowledge," an arresting cleverness, " which yielded the vain-glory of learning without its serious purposefulness." They partook of all things, were anchored in none and were proud of it. Dobschütz remarks in his " Christian Life in the Primitive Church," " The Corinthian's ideal was the unscrupulous enforcement of his own individuality. The merchant toiling upwards by all possible means, the glutton yielding to his every desire, the athlete steeled to physical exercises and bidding defiance to every power : these are the Corinthian types ; in a word, the man whom none surpasses, to whom nothing is impossible and nothing denied."

It is also necessary to give some consideration to that which has constituted one of the most perplexing problems of New Testament historical investigation in the last two or three decades. I refer to the religious atmosphere in the midst of

which this Christian Church was established. Corinth serves as a unique example of conditions which were typical of the civilized world at that time.

One cannot refrain from calling attention also to the striking similarities in world conditions, political and international, in religious perplexity and moral uncertainties between that time and our own. Some writer has said that probably the world was never so full of religious interest, or better, so full of interest in religions as at the time under consideration. We might reasonably apply this statement to the conditions of our time. The days of nationally inclusive thinking were past for that old world. There had been many conquests and many dispersions, and the disposition of national epoch-making events of two or three centuries had resulted in the intermingling of the thought, philosophic and religious, of the whole world.

Cultured nations of the West were accepting with eagerness the mystery cults of orientalism ; as strangely enough to-day many educated and cultured people, together with multitudes of the uncultured, are trying to satisfy their minds in the effete religions of the past, in the decaying eastern mystery cults of the present or in phases of religious belief which have been exploited and exploded again and again in the history of religious thought.

There was a real earnestness to possess some satisfactory religious faith, an anxiety for salvation, a salvation which would primarily free them from an omnipotent Fate, imposed by a hierarchy of the

universe whose most appalling visitation was death. Men and women in the uncertain changing conditions of life were yearning for some supremely higher being to protect them in life and give them assurance after death. They were fearful of a Spirit World—powers of wickedness in high places, which were decidedly hostile to men and against which they could not defend themselves. It is a quality of mind which we can well understand to-day.

Thoughtful people the world over, in a different way perhaps, have something of the same fear—yes, fear of the universe too. It is perhaps not death so much as life itself which dismays them. With the man of vision, it is a realization of the presence of forces—political, economical, psychological—too great for him to control, of passions unloosed which know no discipline and have no consideration and regard. With countless humbler folk in every nation in the world, it is a more intimate matter of meat and drink, of long cold winters out of work, of unprotected old age, of little children whose future is unknown, of changes which make everything so uncertain for them. Not that these fears have not always been present with us ; but they are far more widely known to-day than heretofore. So highly organized have we become, so selfishly protective, that the " will to work " is no longer the supreme factor in the assurance that we shall have the necessaries of life, nor the earth's abundant harvests the certainty we shall have enough to eat. The old simple ways of making a living, the exchange of honest labours,

have been crowded out. So efficiently specialized are men that if one sphere of activity fails them they find themselves unfitted for another.

It is not too much to say that this constitutes a real fear among Christian ministers. If the Church fails them or if they fail the Church, if she so changes her way or methods that they find themselves exhausting their energies in an effort to readapt their life, they begin to wonder if their training of thirty years ago was not all a miserable mistake. In every walk of life, men are finding deep in their hearts a new fear. It haunts them by day and by night, and it is something akin, at least in quality and its effects on the human soul, to that world-old fear which possessed the peoples at the time when Paul lived and preached the Christian Gospel. " For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they ; but we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption ; to wit, the redemption of our body " (Romans viii, 22 and 23).

There is also that craving for assurance ; and we do well to see that it is not so much for a settlement of things as for a knowledge of God more real, more vital and intimate than we have possessed. The mystery religions seem to have provided, externally at least, such relief for the people at that time ; but the emphasis laid on mystery, initiation rites, transmutation of soul essence and deification of the initiate was more inclined to satisfy the superficial intellect than nurture the soul and life of men.

These religions besides served to accentuate the emphasis already put on individuality as over against social and corporate interests, to make its devotees impatient of authority, absurdly valuing spiritual gifts, particularly of the showy kind, and minimizing the ethical importance of such. It is with a great deal of diffidence that one in these days of manifold cults and religions too, even dares to feel critical of such people and their beliefs ; neither dare we dismiss such manifestations as unworthy our notice and as unimportant, for they are significant with the same challenge for a life-giving faith which met Paul in the period we are studying.

CHAPTER III

Mysticism, Pauline and Corinthian

It is a matter of history now that some of our most prominent, if not most trustworthy, New Testament scholars in Germany, France, England and America of ten or twenty years ago concluded that what Paul offered in his Christian Gospel was just another (probably superior) mystery cult. It is a fact established, I think, that the terminology in which Paul expresses his deepest religious experience is quite analogous to that mystic terminology in existence in the pre-Christian days of Corinth. For example, such words as wisdom, knowledge (of God), mystery, spirit, revelation, salvation, redemption and sanctification, and phrases such as those where Paul speaks of "being in (Christ)" and "(Christ) in him," "joined to the Lord," "knowing the power of" and "Lord" itself (Paul, you remember, says "there are many lords") would be quite intelligible, at least familiar terminology to a Corinthian pagan audience.

It is true that some similarity may be traced in the inner processes of their respective religious experiences. These people had certain acquaintance with a redeemer god. Salvation was begotten in them by a process of regeneration, imparted through initiation into mysteries and resulting in a

transmutation of soul essence (more or less physical) which was really supposed to deify the initiate, making him one with his god. In one at least of these religions the idea of regeneration is associated with the death and restoration of the god himself, in the process of which regeneration there is revealed a fully developed conception of communion and fellowship with him.

There was a more or less elaborate system of feasts in which in some cases they ate the god, and in others he is supposed to be their host and they the guests who receive his beneficent influences. The peculiar wisdom and knowledge accredited to him was imparted to them through various kinds of mystic rites, washing and cleansing and feasting as well as through the initiations themselves. This knowledge (of the god) and wisdom is in no wise clearly to be distinguished from their conception of salvation ; as indeed it is difficult to distinguish the same conceptions in Paul himself. This wisdom also manifested itself in a power wholly to possess the individual's life, producing in him states of ecstasy in which visions, revelations, speaking in tongues, and the highest raptures of contemplative thought were common and indeed essential experiences.

Despite such similarities, a sympathetic comparison of Paul's religion with these others serves rather to accentuate the vast differences than to make us believe he was compromised by them. In all mystery religions there is nothing of that ethical passion, that constraining love for men which characterizes—which alone gives definition to—

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Paul and his Gospel. In 1 Corinthians ii, 4, we see Paul himself endeavouring to make this distinction. "What I said, what I preached, did not rest on the plausible arguments of wisdom, but on the proof supplied by the Spirit and its power, so that your faith might not rest on any 'human wisdom' but on the Power of God. We do discuss 'wisdom' with those who are mature; only it is not the wisdom of this world or of the dethroned powers who rule this world, it is the mysterious Wisdom of God that we discuss, that hidden wisdom which God decreed from all eternity for our glory" (Moffatt).

At the same time, it would be more difficult to maintain that many of the Corinthian Christians had not such a mystic conception of the Christian Gospel. It would be interesting, for instance, to know how some of these troublesome, all-wise Corinthians conceived—psychologically or metaphysically—the influence of Christ's Spirit on their lives generally; and especially, in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

In world views, or "age" views, it is now recognized more than previously that the whole religious world at that period possessed some common ground of belief. The intermingling of thought already referred to, and the mystifying kaleidoscopic changes had inclined people to the belief that their age was running itself out. We are perfectly familiar with those apocalyptic forms which this conviction took among the Jews. It is more surprising, however, to find Professor Lake in his "Early Epistles of St. Paul," taking for

granted that Jewish Messianism and Apocalypse had its strict counterpart among the Romans and the Greeks. He writes, " The Messianic expectation presented no difficulties to those who since the time of Augustus had learned to believe that the world cycle was approaching its completion, and that a ' deliverer ' would soon appear to lead mankind into the glories of a golden age. Poets sang about this and the Sibyl prophesied."

It is a little hard to believe that this kind of thinking ever found the serious and purposeful consideration in the Greek or Roman world which it undoubtedly did among the Jews. True Apocalypse is born only under well-defined conditions, viz., a deep conviction of the imperative nature of righteousness, together with an all-embracing faith in a Sovereign God, the power of which reveals itself in apocalypse under the stress of disaster to the highest hopes. Such conditions are really never present in the history of any people, previous to the Christian era, outside the Jews themselves. All of this reveals to us however a strange providence of events moving men's thoughts and feelings to a kind of consummation, preparing an atmosphere expectant of and congenial to the truth itself.

It may be that we have treated this aspect of the Corinthian life at greater length than the particular purpose of this study calls for ; but it does seem necessary to have this background of contrast in order to distinguish clearly that specific spirit and life which Paul in its very midst by action, word and passionate longing undoubtedly presents to

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us. And in the light of modern conditions, suggestively corresponding in many respects with what we have described, it is well to see and to give due value to the earnest sincerity, then and now, of this undisciplined groping after the truth.

These scholars, mentioned above, contended that the synthetic mind of Paul, ranging over the field of religions, had managed to form a syncretism of religious principles which he presented under the name and authority of Jesus who had lived and was crucified and after death rose again. It is a matter of some interest that it has been discovered that just such an attempt at a syncretistic religion was made by the Roman Government at that time with a view to consolidating the liquidating interests of the State, recognizing thereby the power and necessity of religious faith as a binding force in the welfare of material interests ; and it is a tribute to the real earnestness of the peoples, and the peculiarly divine nature of religion itself, however superficial its manifestations, that the attempt was a distinct failure.

It is a matter of even greater interest for us, as history repeating itself under similar conditions, that a student of Chinese Life (Arthur Rugh, art. " If China should go Christian ") writes in an issue of the " Christian Century " that a political movement among some of the intellectuals of China, more or less hostile to the Christian religion and its progress there, is bent at the present time on forming a syncretistic religion embracing the five great religions, Christianity, Mohammedanism, Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism, as a suitable

religion for the new China. We may say with certainty that the attempt is doomed to failure. There is, at least, one thing God does not entrust to us. Religions rise and grow and possess us someway; but we are never permitted to "manufacture" them.

I think it is acknowledged everywhere now that such a precise and ingenious explanation of Paul's gospel, life and work, is far too fine and easy to fit the man and the conditions presented at Corinth. It would seem, however, that the creative genius of Paul used all possible terminology, every religious thought concept, Gentile or Jewish, in an endeavour to exemplify and express his rich religious experience in Christ. His wrestling spirit found avenues of approach and points of contact in many mystic foreshadowings of the eternal truth itself.

The important thing for our consideration is to remember that it was from men and women influenced by these complex tendencies of thought that the Church of Corinth was recruited. Latent tendencies towards an extreme individualism, libertinism and immorality would be present. Convictions such as Paul held about the liberty of the Christian would be seized with avidity, and Paul's own mystic temperament, which indulged itself in revelations and mysteries innumerable, would provide a sufficient authority for the exercise of their own eccentric customs and habits. It is not therefore altogether surprising that in the course of a few years, these people had the temerity to challenge the authority of Paul, the father of their faith, and founder of their Church, and to affix to some of his

doctrines interpretations surcharged with alien matters. They did this, and tested to the full all the resources of Paul's enriched life, and in the course of this, they rendered one great service ; they educed from Paul revealings of himself which probably constitute the finest expressions of the Spirit of Christ to be found in Christian history and literature.

It will be the writer's intention in the following three sections of this work, viz., Section II, " The Eclipse of Popularity," Section III, " Discrimination and Conciliation," Section IV, " Reconciliation and Knowledge of God," which sections form the body and essential substance of the whole work, to study analytically the " soul of Paul " as his inner thoughts and feelings, his ethical appreciations and spiritual aspirations reveal themselves in these two letters. There is also the hope on the part of the writer that such a portrayal of the life of this great apostle may have some practical significance in the understanding of the perplexities of our own modern Church life, and in lending guidance in the discharge of our important and difficult work.

The now generally accepted view, that there were at least four letters written by Paul to the Corinthians at this time, will serve as a working basis. The first letter written is evidently entirely lost, unless we may think the fragment inserted in 2 Corinthians vi, 14—vii, 1 forms part of it. That which we call 1 Corinthians is undoubtedly his second letter, for he refers in it (1 Cor. v, 9) to a previous letter. Probably 1 Corinthians was written in the year A.D. 55, in the spring of the year

when Paul was at Ephesus (Prof. A. S. Peake, "A Critical Introduction to the New Testament") although some good authorities claim it as late as the spring of A.D. 56. The first nine chapters of 2 Corinthians are thought now to have been Paul's fourth letter, while chapters x to xiii, 1-10, of 2 Corinthians are believed to constitute a fragment of a very severe letter written before their repentance, to which the first part of the letter particularly alludes.

Both 1 and 2 Corinthians are well authenticated as Paul's writings. 1 Corinthians was early recognized as such in the Church. 2 Corinthians evidently came much more slowly into circulation, but is recognized by all scholars who are not hypercritical as an authentic production of Paul. There are still some good scholars who believe that 2 Corinthians is one letter and that the two distinctive parts, mentioned above, may be co-ordinated. All agree that it was written, in parts or as a whole, at no great intervals or interval after our so-called 1 Corinthians letter.

PART II

THE ECLIPSE OF POPULARITY

CHAPTER IV

Another Approach to the Understanding of Paul

After the work of establishing the Church at Corinth was completed, Paul had withdrawn to prosecute missionary work elsewhere. In his place came teachers or leaders, and among them Apollos, probably an Alexandrian Jew, who seems to have been a gifted speaker and a brilliant interpreter of Scripture by the allegorical method. It is doubtful if Peter ever really visited Corinth, although some, including Prof. Lake, believe that his movements were much more wide-spread than has been supposed. At any rate, we find a Cephas party here; probably disciples of his, or others like-minded, made their influence felt at an early period in the Corinthian Church. Paul at no time gives any hint of his doubting the sincerity of these men; but the facts reveal that their presence or teachings resulted in the alienation of large sections of the Church from their loyalty to him. Not only so, but they became coldly critical of his authority and teachings.

Letters from friends (the household of Chloe) were received by Paul to the effect that there were parties or cliques in the Church, that one of their

number was guilty of conduct which to Paul's mind was almost unbelievable even among Gentiles. Though few evidently were guilty of such immoralities, a large section of the Church—to the great grief of Paul—were not even shocked, indeed were supporting the accused and were openly defiant of the criticism of the loyal party and of Paul himself. They went so far as to speak contemptuously of Paul's person, his speech and the poverty of his preaching ; later they ridiculed his authority to direct their conduct, and were evidently making odious comparisons between him and those who had followed him. I imagine we might be safe in surmising that they did not mean quite all that they said.

As a rule, a religious leader in circumstances like these suffers more because he has some doughty and loyal defenders than if he were entirely alone. The party spirit provokes exaggeration in accusation and condemnation, and there is no doubt that Paul suffered from this in Corinth. Nevertheless, Paul seems to consider their attitude to him as sincere. In fact it is wonderful with what seriousness he regards their views and their overweening estimate of themselves. He always believes in them. He persists, despite manifold provocations, in believing that these boastful, inconsiderate, selfish wiseacres are, in virtue of their acceptance of Christ, in possession of something which makes them peculiarly brothers of his own.

It is no easy matter for us to know just how Paul felt under such undeserved accusation and desertion, but it will be seen that any just appreciation of the

Apostle's character, its greatness and nobility, necessitates an attempt to feel into his inner life, and presupposes as well some knowledge of his general experience as a Christian, and of this particular experience also which was his in the Church of Corinth. Probably he was quite human enough to feel keenly the personal injury done him by their ingratitude and inconsideration; but it would seem from the first, and it becomes increasingly more evident, that Paul considered their apostasy to him a matter vital to their Christian faith as such.

It is because of this that it seems peculiarly important to study Paul again, not from the point of view of the theological or moral or ethical teachings which may have been his, nor from the standpoint of his great missionary vision and enterprise; but from the phenomena of his own inner life, which can readily be traced in all essential features within the compass of these two letters. The real Paul can never be discovered by merely critical methods of the kind so much in vogue to-day, and his kinship with Jesus Christ cannot be measured by the intellectual and theological framework into which he wrought the living experience of his soul.

SIGNIFICANT PHASES OF MODERN CHURCH LIFE

Fortunately for our particular kind of study of Paul, we are not unfamiliar in modern Church life with experiences somewhat analogous to his in Corinth. It has become almost conspicuous to those who are interested at all, that experienced ministers in the Church of Christ are not finding

their matured experience and ripening wisdom the advantage to them that they might have expected. With men of science, in journalism, in the professions of law and medicine, in big business and in academic and educational circles, experience and knowledge seem to be vital qualifications for those placed in positions of trust. It does not seem to be quite so characteristic of the Christian ministry. For there are many men enriched in the deepest experiences of life and knowledge of God, who, because they have inevitably become poorer in some of the lesser adornments of the Christian ministry—adornments upon which, nevertheless, the temper and culture of the people of this day tend to put most value—have found their ministry of declining usefulness as their knowledge of the needs of men and their certainty of God have materially increased. And perhaps in just that proportion has it become a fact. This constitutes one of the perplexing problems of modern Church life, of more significance perhaps to the Church herself than to the individuals concerned. How to conserve within herself and to realize the fruits of the wisdom and experience of her matured men, constituting as it does the Church's most valuable asset, no matter what people in their passing moods may think about it, offers a task which is very real and most vital.

It is recognized, in a general way, that this has been the age of young men, especially in countries which are yet in the formative stage of their development ; but this demand for youth has been particularly noticeable in the Christian Church. The

youthful enthusiasm of young men has been the solution of many a congregation's difficulties, of a financial kind, of dwindling attendance, etc., in the last fifteen or twenty years. Young men have been commissioned to tide these congregations over the shallows, and give to them a new lease of life for a time, and in most cases they have succeeded admirably well in doing so. Yet, perhaps, strong emphasis should be laid on the fact that any such solution can only be temporary and apparent. The Church of God cannot hope to maintain herself long on relays of enthusiasm—even though that enthusiasm be Christian—nor can the Church of God maintain her prestige in the world by more perfected modes of operation and establishing herself in the eyes of men as a humanitarian or educational organization of conspicuous executive and business ability. It is surely patent that if the Church is to live it must be permeated with nothing less than knowledge, experience of God. No institution would seem to have as little reason for existence as the institution which assumes the name of God and cannot in some unmistakable way verify the reality of its claims.

Painful experiences in the lives of servants of the Church arising chiefly from such conditions make us reflect on matters relative to the substance of our theme—the deep sense of disappointment and pain often attendant upon the ministry of Christ, and the causes which make this possible.

It may be that the Church, the ministry and the perplexing problems involved at this present time offer, only on a much larger scale, a fairly just

parallel to the circumstances surrounding the Apostle's Corinthian experience, and this because of a true kinship in nature of the circumstances and causes operative, the general temper of the people, then and now, and the peculiar character of the Gospel itself.

There is more than a suspicion in many quarters to-day that something less than the Gospel of Christ is being preached in our pulpits and something less than its true results is being achieved. And probably one of the most disconcerting phases of the difficulty and of any implied accusation is the extraordinary effort and ingenuity employed, mostly in town and city conditions, but more recently in village and rural places as well, to make the Gospel of Christ interesting and palatable not only to the growing multitudes of non-churchgoers, but to our respectable church-goers themselves. Is it that at the core of our life there is subtle unbelief in the efficacy of this Gospel, in its own power and appeal, that we engage so many aids to commend it? It is manifest before our eyes that some other modern organizations are winning a speedy way into the minds and confidence of men through the sheer strength of some truth they advocate. God and the Gospel of Jesus Christ are not likely to be honoured otherwise. A similar spirit of unreserved and unrestricted faith, at least, is the first requisite to commend such with any success to the world. Is it just possible that a *quality* of faith which has distinguished Christianity has been lost, and that such needs to be recovered?

On the other hand, it is the conviction of very

many that never before was the Gospel of Jesus Christ being presented so intelligently, truly and completely as to-day. Jesus has been re-discovered historically; lost emphases in His teaching, in His attitude to life, are being brought to the fore. The whole social and scientific movement of the last generation is bearing powerfully on the interpretation of Christ's gospel. Terms of Christian experience and the principles of its teachings are being reset and enlarged in the light of our modern knowledge. The tendency has been to stress the social aspect of religious experiences, ethics, salvation and culture rather than the individualistic, which it is claimed entirely possessed the outlook of the past.

It is to be observed here, however, that it is doubtful whether any such precise claim on the part of modernism may legitimately be made. Historically, the sane and rational wing of the Church has at no time made these terms, and what they denote, mutually exclusive. In the very nature of the case it is impossible to do so. To take an example; there never was any conception of individual salvation strictly independent of the social relations and obligations of life. Furthermore, there never was a time when social ethics and individual ethics did not implicate each other, and when both together were not a first feature in any true Christian's regard. All that may be claimed for modern Christianity, whatever form it may take, is that it is realizing, though all too slowly, its right of place in spheres of life which did not exist for the people of past centuries.

This new re-alignment of forces (when men more clearly specify what their souls crave after, and when they rid themselves of the purely intellectual interpretations of it, traditional and modern, which have confused and obscured the thing itself) will decide, I believe, their respective positions around matters neither individualistic nor social to the exclusion of each other ; but rather around the matter as to the primacy and essentiality of one or other as *the* determining factor in the creative motive and power of Christian faith itself. The real issue would appear to be : Is Christianity essentially spiritual or material ? I use these terms advisedly, and in some such way as Paul opposed the " spirit " to the " flesh," for I believe that his distinction is still a valid one.

" Spiritual life " for Paul apparently meant all life or any aspect of it as touched and transformed by the Spirit of God ; whereas that of the flesh included all life, the physical passions and excesses, of course, but also mental life and moral idealism and achievement, even religion, not so touched and transformed. It may be claimed without apology that this Pauline distinction has still force in true Christian experience. If we might put it in a different way: does Christianity find its deepest origin (not only in every life, but in time also) in something creatively new, the result of inexplicable influences and purposes, or transcendent powers; or is it a matter purely organic with life and its movements, as well as with ourselves and our environment; so that " our Christian work," as a modern psychologist has recently explained, " should

supremely lie in an endeavour for a truer adjustment of right stimuli to those correct responses lying latent in every soul" ?

As we learn to interpret our experiences and deepest religious yearnings not in mere intellectual formulæ, but in the spirit, it will be around this one clear issue that we shall be obliged to make our decisions; and perhaps in doing so, we shall find that the true heart of modernism and the yearning spirit of traditionalism are after all not so far apart as we have come to believe.

Another significant sign of the times is the fact that ministers of the Church are becoming sensitively critical of themselves and of their profession. Men of this vocation are not so consistently sure as in times past of the sacredness of their office and ministry, nor of the singular value of their work in the community. A real and earnest humility has laid hold of and somewhat depressed the minds of some of our most thoughtful and sensitive men. Strains of subdued and sobered humility flavour—and I would say greatly enrich—the utterances of our very greatest preachers. It is not pessimism—these men have not lost God—rather they give the impression of renewing their knowledge of God in larger and more indefinable measure; and they are not altogether so sure of themselves, for this new currency cannot be defined in either arid rationalism, modern naturalism, or dogmatic traditionalism, and the people to whom they preach and with whom they deal seem as yet very far from having ears to hear this new language of their souls.

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Moreover in those churches, especially where the calling system is in vogue, men speak openly of a " dead line " in the minister's career, and they mean that in the majority of cases, the minister's usefulness and acceptance comes to its zenith at an age when in other professions men are anticipating a fuller and more useful life. It is, however, anything but certain that a thoroughgoing investigation among similar professions would confirm this opinion about the ministry. Nevertheless this dread appearance across the ministerial horizon assumes sufficient reality, because of the fixity of the system in which men work and their dependence upon the varying moods of men, to reveal at least a condition of mind which is not healthy and which warrants the deepest sympathy and consideration. It can no longer be attributed to slothfulness or selfishness, or to a lack of growth in those most vital qualities, intellectual acumen and spiritual perception. Ministers as a rule are more eager and ready to learn and to try new methods, than their brethren in either the legal or medical fraternities. No other class of men are more sincerely thinking out their salvation with fear and trembling than they. It should be said, too, as a simple statement of the facts, that no other class of men are given the regard and sympathetic consideration that the people in most congregations give to their ministers; people usually are forbearing with them when they would not withhold criticism from other men.

An honest and unselfish workman in the office of the Christian ministry is likely to be long tolerated and upheld even in the twentieth century, provided

that the financial strain is not too pressing and the competition from other churches not too keen. But touch these nerve-centres of the modern Church and strange things do happen. If it be true—and I am inclined to think it is—that the modern ministry faces grave difficulties, and in more cases than we can ever know (for ministers and their wives are, if nothing else, often very brave people) experiences a keen sense of disappointment and pain, if not of disillusionment, it is by reason of many causes, two of which should receive some attention. The first is a cause of long standing, it has always been with us; and the second is comparatively new, it is a cause born out of the peculiar circumstances of our time.

The first is due to the peculiar nature of the ministry itself. It will surely be correct to infer that our service as disciples of Christ should be marked in its true inwardness by characteristics which distinguished His own ministry to the world. We shall not ask to escape the necessary consequences of that life which He lived and gave, and which He asked us to espouse and teach. Our business is to live and speak the truth as it is in Him, to call ourselves and others to a Cross, a Cross of humiliation and a Cross of responsibility; and I believe that the Cross of Christ from either angle is still an offence to our ordinary inclinations. If nothing more, the Cross is still the defeat of pride and independence, and the nemesis of all selfishness; and those who accept and justify it will be the victims of ordinary circumstances and of all those people who cannot abide such challenging truths.

The story of Jesus is a very simple and vivid one. He started His ministerial career with great popularity. Jesus Himself at no time misjudged the meaning of that popularity ; so that when men came to know Him as He really was, and the crowds accordingly melted, Jesus was not disillusioned. He ended His career in the presence of a few devoted souls whose hopeless pity could not save Him. Jesus in life and death was the victim not of men, but of the greatness of His own soul, of devotion to the Truth itself. We must ever be reminding ourselves afresh that such is Christianity. Even if Jesus' own life is in so many respects unique, it cannot be unique in that respect whereby salvation depends upon the possession of its essential and truest nature.

Paul's life is of a character with his Lord. He laid the foundations of the greatest organization the world has known. So far as we have any knowledge, he died in the presence, not of loved ones, nor of friends, nor of a world of kindly discernment or consideration ; but of strange Roman officials, possibly on an executioner's block. Probably that which should startle us is the fact that we have come to think of a minister's career in so different a light and with such different expectations. I am sure that if it were given to us to trace the inner workings as we may the outward workings of any true Christian's life we should find that the implications of the Cross have become the law, and finally the meaning of that life. And it is this principle, working unseen in the whole process of life in its organic unity, which con-

stitutes the most potent force—though it cannot be measured or ever be seen at all—for the making of righteousness and the bringing of salvation to the human race. At any rate, our trustfulness in the midst of what seems to be declining usefulness, or in other defeats in the ambitions of our life, is likely to prove our noblest refiner, the opportunity for the finest demonstration of the power of God's Spirit over our lives and those of others, indeed the true begetter of life unto life. It will be so, if we can *believe* in God.

Then secondly, is not some of our present difficulty due to the fact of a marked change in emphasis as to the function and nature of the ministry itself—this probably being a natural consequence, as I have suggested before, of the obvious change in the culture and habits of the people? How far such change in respect to piety, devotion and manners is a result of failure on the part of the Church and its ministry would be worthy of consideration if there were, indeed, any adequate means of estimating it; but the whole process of change in very recent years has been so vast in its sweep, so all inclusive, intricate and complex, that we cannot attribute any attendant unpleasant results to any one particular cause. We have all been caught in the swirl of a movement far too great for us, and it is doubtful if anyone can see at all clearly its meaning. That distinct changes, however, have come over religious life, not only in its manners, but also in its central potencies, is obvious to everyone.

Perhaps one might venture in mere outline some aspects of the character of this change, as reflecting on Church life of thirty years ago, and especially on many never-to-be-forgotten people who were the product of the preaching of thirty years beyond that time, as he sees that past in contrast with this present. If we should *first* think of the minister himself, his place and function in the Church life have appreciably changed. Executive and organizing ability rather than preaching power has gradually become the most necessary qualification of those who occupy our modern pulpits. It is to be recognized at the same time that in many cases we have really very excellent preaching, in some respects finer, probably, than any to be recalled in the past. The greatness, however, of present-day preaching is marked by ability, scholarship, and frequently a certain imaginative or rhetorical brilliance, while the older was remarkable for that which is best described, perhaps, as a sense of power.

We should not delude ourselves into believing that this power was of doubtful quality due mostly to an over-credulity on the part of the people of those days. These preachers were men of indisputable strength of character; they themselves were shrewd discerners of character, and they bore in their persons and words the unmistakable marks of that dignity which character alone gives. Besides, and of greater importance even, they impressed their hearers with possessing a "certain" know-

ledge of God and of His work in the souls of men, which was the result, not, as is so often suggested, of their limited intellectual and scientific outlook, but of a thorough-going, honest, and unreserved personal consecration to the things which they believed to be true. These men knew God, and by a surer method than that which is purely intellectual or inferential.

Modern preaching is decidedly humanitarian in character—too often sentimentally so, as such preaching is bound to be in the course of time—while the preaching of these men was characteristically theocentric. They did not glorify man but God, His greatness and His goodness ; and their knowledge of Him was not so much historically as spiritually discerned. While it is a most encouraging truth to know that man is made in the image of God, it is proving nothing less than paralysis to our whole religious life to infer our conception of the character of God from even the highest traits of character to be discovered in man. All merely intellectual or inferential search after God inevitably tends to anthropomorphism on the one hand, or, if scientific, to a kind of pantheism on the other ; and there would seem but one way of escaping such fallacious conceptions of God : there must be possible a spiritual achievement of the soul of man over and independent of, its purely psychical self, by which it wins direct access to the very Spirit of God and thereby knows Him.

It is to be acknowledged also that modern preaching is more accurate and careful, due to a better knowledge of the historic development of

sacred writings, creeds and dogmas, and also of human life itself ; and because of its larger and truer perspective ought to reveal a truer proportion ; but the question is, does it ? These men of other days were, I suppose, what we have ironically come to call " literalists " in so far as historical interpretation is concerned, but strangely enough, as interpreters of the inner spirit of Scriptural truth, no name would seem more inapplicable ; and as shrewd discerners of what constituted the great themes, they were quite superior to our modern pulpit, as a perusal of the church notices of a Saturday evening's edition of any city paper will readily show.

For example, the substance of the older type of preaching revolved around subjects such as these : The reality of sin, its disintegrating and separating power, the absolute need of God and the work of Christ, the Love of God and its emancipating power, the blessedness of righteousness which came through faith in Jesus Christ. Emphasis was laid on communion with Christ and fellowship with man, and upon the reality of eternal life and the Holy Spirit. Apart altogether from the interests of traditional theology, such subjects, if they do not exactly describe in modern terms, at least, embody those great interests which really concern human minds. And it is for this reason that we claim that there was a truer proportion in the older preaching ; all other matters were incidental to these prime factors.

Modern preaching from one point of view is exercising itself in discussions of modern topics, lessons from literature and life, the incidence of

character, Biblical, historical and of modern times, the consequence of moral and immoral living, the requisites for success in life and the proprieties of conduct. Great emphasis is also given to the programme and policies of the Church, and to the prohibitive and the legislative regulations necessary in social and national life. It is difficult to find a true centre in it all, one great ruling principle, an authority. Christ Himself has a rather indefinite place in it. He provides a study in character or a perfect example and a supreme ideal. This confusion and apparent uncertainty may not altogether constitute a fault, however ; it may just mean that the modern mind is in that transition stage, preparatory to a completely new and vital discovery of Christ. The story of the New Testament itself, we should remind ourselves, is just the story of the gradual discovery of the personality and powers of Jesus until He was named " Christ," and finally " Son of God," although in New Testament days the minds of men were all the time focused on Jesus and on Him alone.

Strangely enough there is a very different point of view from which we may see modern preaching. This, no doubt, is a reaction from the other, and for the most part is hostile to it. The emphasis here is laid on certain beliefs, creeds, and specific interpretations of them, as *the* test of men's knowledge of Christ. The fact of the nearness of Christ's second coming as *the* hope of the world, together with a radical pessimism about life itself as it is at present constituted, is usually made a point of emphasis in this kind of preaching.

Whatever may be said in favour of either form of modern preaching, I think it may be claimed with justice to all that the first kind lacks the positive character, the certainty of the older preaching ; while the second has nothing of that strong hopefulness and joy which distinguished the preaching of former days. This is probably due to the fact that in the latter case emphasis has come to be laid on the external, the letter of Christ's gospel rather than on its substance, its spirit. It is not true, as has been consistently assumed by the supporters of this kind of preaching, that theirs *is the traditional preaching ;* at least it is neither the early Church, nor the traditional Protestant, gospel.

It is a fact that Paul, Martin Luther, Wycliffe, John Knox, John Wesley, and to come to more recent times, Robert Murray McCheyne and Andrew Bonar, did believe in a second coming of Jesus of a more or less physical nature in a more or less materialistic setting ; and often, I suppose, they felt that this great event was approximately near ; but this was not the gospel of any one of the above-mentioned men. They were tied, it is also true, more or less to the letter of Scripture and creed, but the *letter* was not their gospel. These considerations were quite incidental to their real gospel. Their gospel was the fact of Christ, His living presence in the world in their day and generation, His power to change and transform completely the characters of men who believed in Him. That gospel was not doctrinaire, but experimental. The doctrine of Christ's second coming and even those intellectual attempts to

define definitions—for such is the meaning of all creeds—the great mystic apprehensions of God by the soul, and His historic revelations, cannot by the nature of the case be *experiences* of men, and consequently do not ever form their essential gospel.[1] It is a great mistake to identify any such doctrinaire preaching with that which we have come to call the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

However, there are many more people than we usually suspect who long earnestly for that peculiar quickening quality of the older preaching ; and it is the absence of this rather than the disturbing elements of new thought which makes their quarrel with so much which is called *modernism ;* at least, it provides them with a just reason for questioning its real value. There is evidence also that most people find nothing so stimulating and so satisfying as the mental and moral exercise of their powers upon those traditional themes of God as He is in Christ, if these are made applicable, as they ought to be, to the modern demands of intellect so far as intellect can ever define them, but more especially I should say, to the more serious and searching implications of modern ethics. But we should be prepared to recognize that any such readjustment bears far more poignantly upon our own lives, in their varied social and economic relationships, than upon the character of the ancient dogmas which may be involved. Nothing other than God in Christ and the exercise of the undivided personality upon

[1] The claim made here, is that a man's gospel is always the substance of that which may be experienced and not an intellectual interpretation of it. Certainly a prospective event such as Christ's second advent cannot be a religious experience.

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that truth has produced the truest worship, and nothing has so changed character and accentuated personality. It alone has created a missionary "spirit," as opposed to a missionary "interest," which is the fashionable word of the modern Church in its attempted evangelization of the whole world.

The truth is, there would seem to be growing up within us a compelling need of and a feeling for a more purely spiritual and truly ethical Christianity than that known either to our fathers or to ourselves; but such as yet is harboured only in the souls of the most discerning, our bravest and most sensitive people. In the meantime, since preaching in itself has proven inadequate to command the modern mind, other methods have been employed to secure and preserve our great interests. Expensive machinery has been set up and must be kept running, programmes and policies have been elaborated and approved to that end, and success is largely measured in terms of statistical records. The minister of ordinary capacity and energy is consumed in the direction and guidance of this intricate mechanism, unless he be courageous enough to defy the powers that be, and accept the consequences. But, that executive and organizing ability has been exalted, is a fact; and we believe beyond measure. Because, however, of the exigencies of our times and the uncertainty of our work, things which are likely to be accentuated in the days to come, there are signs that a new moral earnestness may bring the prophet spirit to life again and reinstate the preacher in his pulpit.

Secondly, and partly as a corollary of what has been already said, we find the following characteristic features of the changed conditions. A feverish and restless running after families and single persons has taken the place of what our fathers valued in "pastoral" oversight and cure of souls. Efficient "tabulated" oversight, with a distinct flavour of entertainment, of a higher or lower type, seems necessary to draw the people whom the Diet of Worship itself used to move to the house of God.

That eagerness, that appreciation of God's Word which surely characterized the people of the past, is not a thing to be lightly lost. We are often reminded that there was in those days much hypocrisy, that the peculiar nature of their temperament and quest led easily to Pharisaism. The criticism is quite valid ; but, indeed, there is quite as much hypocrisy and Pharisaism in the modern Church, only the motive towards these vices seems to be different. The man of the past strove to be considered a righteous character, the man of the present strives to be esteemed a generous, self-sacrificing citizen. The former, in his faults, pays tribute to a good man, the latter does his homage to our more modern "good fellow." There is a vast difference, probably an essential distinction, between that which lies behind the two terms ; and probably nothing better reveals the inner spirits, the respective emphases of the Church of the past and of the present.

Endless programmes, necessitating readjustments and new attractions almost every year, constitute

the means by which we shepherd the souls of little children, and keep within our guidance and influence our older boys and girls. I need not remind the reader that in the past this was the painstaking work of responsible parents, the influence of godly homes, and not least of all, the result of an awe instilled in our impressionable minds by the peculiar atmosphere of the house of God itself, where parents and children in the family pew sat together as a family to worship God. To many, this is the most sacred memory of their life. The Sunday-school in those days was but auxiliary to a far more important work. So far have we come from this, that the tendency is strong towards the institutionalizing of all religious training. Whether it is a right tendency or one fraught with great dangers ought to be a matter of grave concern to all Christian people.

It is not so many years ago since August Bebel in Germany and Louis Bodin in France advocated strongly the institutionalizing of all family life. Where we were interested at all, we were amused rather than alarmed because it sounded so irrational and absurd ; nevertheless in European countries tragic conditions have issued from this very teaching in very recent years. We ourselves do not realize what it may entail that the Church in her policy seems to be assuming the responsibility and, whether she means it or not, is really giving encouragement to the people to trust her in the supreme matter of implanting and nurturing those delicate religious impressions, those fundamental moral precepts, and more intimate relations of

conduct which constitute the bed-rock of all true character. Reflection will tell us that it is the painstaking care, the sacrifice, the anxious responsibility entailed in giving and receiving such things which has constituted the strongest bond of family life itself. This is the parents' supreme prerogative and the seal of the perpetuity of the family, and for parents to fail to exercise it is to hazard family life itself. No mother or father should commit this great divine trust to another, no matter how skilful or trustworthy that other may be. It is like dispossessing their own child in the strongest tie that binds them together.

It is certain at all events that having gone so far we must either reconsider our whole work or go much farther. Parents everywhere have transferred their responsibilities in the matter to the Sunday School and the mid-week activities; and I suppose I am only saying what very many workers feel when I say that the system is proving painfully inadequate in training our children in a knowledge of the Bible and its truths and in building up that character which this age seems to need. We must either find more time, build further institutions, or win our way to a share in the curriculum of the public school. Or is it that our very necessities will compel us in course of time to do something more than all this ? Shall we acquire that courage dangerously to invade the home again in some such manner as Christ implied when He sent out His first disciples to do missionary work, and thus create a totally different atmosphere, in which Christianity will be its own authority and vindication, and by

which the young mind will, of necessity, be impressed ?

Such distinctions may be too sharply drawn; our prevailing methods and policies are to a great extent the result of stubborn conditions which have been confronting us. My chief interest is to show that such methods demand a new type of ministry; and, in point of fact, we have in recent years been in the process of creating such, and much of the difficulty under consideration is due to that fact. The sudden eclipse of Paul was due to circumstances, in point of detail, very far different, yet there is sufficient similarity in the spirit of these Corinthian types to the temper of our present age to warrant our using the Apostle and his attitude as a light to our path, and perhaps, to encourage that spirit of protest which undoubtedly lies hidden in many hearts.

The feeling, prevalent with some, at any rate, is that they are being displaced in spite of themselves. It will be suggested, no doubt, that it is simply a matter of their being outgrown in the development of religious life. I have no doubt that the Corinthians had this very mind concerning the great Apostle. It is, however, surely the conviction of certain well-appointed men, who know people not officially but in the every-day realities of their needs, the difficulties, the fears and hopes which life entails, that they and their people are being made victims of an over-growth which bids fair to muffle, if not stifle, religion itself. At any rate such fears and misgivings, and the pain and disappointment involved, probably constitute a kind of general

experience to which we are all related (for our very best efforts are not so promising that any need be elated), and which will give us sympathetic access to the peculiar experience which happened to be Paul's fortune in the Corinthian Church.

CHAPTER V

The Peculiar Work of the Christian Ministry

This task which is set before Christian ministers is undoubtedly the most difficult entrusted to men. Were it not that all earnest servants of Christ see certain indisputable results from their efforts, they must, I think, ever despair of doing what they are supposed to do. Is not the Christian work that of communicating living knowledge of God—the very spirit and nature of God—to other human souls? Nothing less can be the Church's work, and no mere educational methods are likely either to comprehend its nature or achieve its end. Mrs. Oliphant in "Salem Chapel" seems to have discovered the implications of such a work. If I understand her aright, she refuses to believe that by mere teaching or instruction, however intellectually conceived and skilfully and even sympathetically presented, however honest the desire and effort, we can communicate realities of life and God to others. Many of our modern fiction writers may lack the literary conception and power to give them permanent greatness, but there is often in their writings the shrewdest spiritual insight; and perhaps this contention of Mrs. Oliphant's may be described as of that kind.

I suppose the communication of any know-

ledge, the transference of "thought-concepts," is most mysterious, and indeed, a very wonderful thing. To communicate "life-concepts" is something even more difficult, and constituted for Paul one of the deep things of God past finding out, a reflection of which is to be seen in 1 Corinthians ii, 10, 11, "But unto us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God," and notice particularly, "For who among men knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of a man which is in him? Even so the things of God none knoweth save the Spirit of God. But we received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things which are freely given to us by God."

Paul's well-known tripartite psychology of flesh, soul and spirit is not so much the result of Rabbinic and Jewish habits of thought, as of the force of his new-found Christian experience. Man's soul achieved vital relation with the ultimate reality (God) only by a transcendence over itself, which gave it a new individuality which he called the spirit in man. By possession of this alone could man either receive or communicate what he called life.

But to speak of Paul again in this connection, let us at present confine ourselves to the problem as we were approaching it before. To get another person to know what you know in its ultimate or enriched reality, that is, to lead that soul into the *real presence*, so to speak, of your own life, or to find your way into his *real presence* is, if we reflect upon it at all, about the most difficult task of life. To lead a soul into the very presence of God Himself

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would seem, to the thinking man, to be an impossible task, if for no other reason than the fact that no one can claim to know from any agencies of pure mind what that *presence* is. It is a common matter to think about God, but to *know* Him is, to say the least, radically and qualitatively different. Yet to know Him and to communicate that knowledge is the task assigned to the Christian ministry ; and it is this very great thing, we are persuaded (so far as a person can be persuaded of anything), they are permitted to do. No meeting of people anywhere, for example, or for any purpose, is quite of a kind with a Christian service, if that service approaches to anything of its true nature. There are influences there not ours to explain, but to accept, possess and use. Accordingly, methods, means and forms, in comparison with the fact of a certain peculiar atmosphere, are relatively unimportant, and our greatest consideration should be given to the significance of the atmosphere itself.

The author of " Salem Chapel " perceives this. She speaks of Vincent, after the tragedy and deliverance in his own family life, as he goes to his accustomed place to preach to the people. " He is not careful," she says, " what anyone would say or think; for he no longer pictures to himself the upturned faces in Salem, all conscious of the tragedy connected with his name. The sense of deliverance in his heart emancipated him, and gave a contrary impulse to his thoughts. In the weakness of an excited and exhausted frame, a certain gleam of the ineffable and miraculous came over the young man. He was again in the world where God stoops down

to change, with one touch of His finger, the whole current of man's life—the world of childhood, of genius, of faith—that other world, dark sphere of necessity and fate where nothing could stay the development into dread immortality of the obstinate human intelligence, and where dreary echoes of speculation still questioned whether any change were possible in heart and spirit, or, if saving souls were a mere figure of speech, floated away far off over his head, a dark fiction of despair." . . . " He saw distinctly that there were glistening eyes in the crowd, and felt what was somewhat an unusual consciousness—that his heart had made communications to other hearts in his audience almost without knowing it."

Vincent's consciousness of his own bankruptcy in the things which mattered to people, curiously enough gave him that self-abandonment which for the first time yielded him his true freedom. And this freedom of soul is the reality wherein is worked the one greatest miracle of life : he found he could speak to the souls of other people in the very realities of the soul's innermost life.

PAUL'S PREACHING : ITS SIGNIFICANCE FOR HIMSELF AND ITS INNER CHARACTER

It seems almost a truism to say that Paul believed in preaching; but it is not straining the evidence of the records to affirm that for Paul himself the power of preaching was one of the " marvels " of this faith which he had made his own. When the Corinthians' devotion to certain beloved leaders had

apparently obscured their vivid sense of humble and grateful acknowledgment of God, he in most earnest protest disclaims passionately having even baptized any of them except Crispus and Gaius, and the household of Stephanus, which he had almost forgotten. Here Paul incidentally lays bare what he believed to be the supreme work of his ministry. "For Christ sent me not to baptize but to preach the gospel, not in the wisdom of words, lest the Cross of Christ should be made void" (1 Corinthians i, 17). We need not hesitate to believe that for Paul the simple proclamation of the Good News was the most necessary and most decisive work of the whole Christian ministry.

And it is the *directness* of Paul's methods and the *certainty* of his expectations which impress one and confound the "round-aboutness" of our labours and appeals to-day. By preaching Paul expected to penetrate the vitals of men's souls, to cleave the heart of family life. Preaching, Paul averred, saved men in some sort of unmistakable fashion, at least those who were "called." There are some peculiar features about his preaching which it is our privilege to reflect upon; for such not only disclose the intimate inner religious life of this man, but reveal the condition of consciousness from which all great preaching proceeds.

To Paul, it may be affirmed, Christian preaching, except for its attested results, must appear nothing other than foolishness. "It was God's good pleasure through the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (1 Cor. i, 22). The whole message of the Gospel "Christ crucified" must,

he believed, inevitably appear either a stumbling block or sheer folly to the Jewish type of mind which looked for signs and wonders, or to the Greek who sought Wisdom. The truth of this gospel could only be apprehended and made manifest by what he called *Faith*, together evidently with the peculiar effects this faith had on the soul of man.

The preaching of such a message had so little in itself to commend it to the minds of men, that the power and effectiveness of it constitute one of the great discoveries of Paul's active ministry. At the same time, "this foolishness" did not for Paul, as is often assumed, consist in the incredible nature of God's wonderful free offer to men, but in something which had to do with his own inner experience as a preacher, viz., the incommensurably great and distinguishing results in comparison with the human efforts and skill put into it.

It should also be recognized that the "foolishness" of the Cross and the Christian gospel in Paul's conception was due partly to the fact of its essential contradiction to the spirit of the world and of human nature itself. He saw this more clearly, perhaps, and was convinced of its truth, in a way that many to-day are not prepared to acknowledge or approve. There is little doubt but that Paul put all his powers into his preaching; but it is something far other than rhetoric, persuasive words, convincing argument, or any other mental or emotional adaptability to the minds and affections of men could ever produce, which is the result.

Paul, whether right or wrong, undoubtedly felt that something animated his words and his thoughts

from within ; and there would also appear to be a mighty Abettor from without, convincing those to whom he spoke. Accordingly he is able to say, in 1 Corinthians ii, 3, "And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling." He is thinking of his preaching; and so it is not likely the physical weakness to which he seemed so often subject, nor that nervousness before people natural to many great men, to which he refers, but a consciousness of the absence of anything in his total human effort to do what he was called upon to do. And it is encouraging to think that in this anxious state of mind he preached, was obedient, in short, not to the strongest inclinations but to the urge of his spirit, and he found such preaching, as he describes it, "in demonstration of the Spirit and of Power" (1 Cor. ii, 5).

Just here, it would seem, we touch the constituent of the Christian equation. There have been many reasons to cause us to characterize Paul's whole life as a supreme venture of faith. In its Christian beginnings we have the unique spectacle of a radical conversion from the position of an extreme persecutor to that of a slavish loyalty to Him whom he persecuted. Latterly he makes his well-known revolutionary venture with the Gentile world. Sometimes his spirit is shown even to finer effect, if not so apparent to everybody, in that sublime faith in which he bids men forsake the well-defined protection of the law and its familiar adjuncts, and trust their morals, life and destiny, to an indefinable, intangible something—another law to be written in the hearts of men through their acceptance of

Jesus Christ. More, in that conviction, which we cannot but believe Paul entertained at times, that that great empire would one day be in the grip and possession of that which he himself possessed, in his daring to walk every day and hour in the path of his deepest instincts, in the certainty of the impending realization of the highest impulses and imaginations his heart could conceive, we have an assurance, which no circumstances that we know at that time were at all adequate to produce, the assurance of a man whose faith needs deeper explanation than the evidence of outward things will supply.

We have not, however, realized so clearly that the very essence of his preaching constitutes a revelation of this same venture of faith. In those many significant times—and unfortunately we know so very little about them, where people gathered, and why and how—when Paul had an opportunity to present his message, apparently, if we are to believe his own words, all the mystery of his personality was active and alive. And probably that mystery was sublimely this, that Paul was sincerely conscious of his own utter weakness, as with far more than ordinary insight he discerned those deep things in human life, in tradition, custom and convention, established against him. *Paul believed in the reality of God; somehow God was for him the most real factor in life, else he would never have preached.* We must remember that he had nothing of our vaunted church life, fine choirs, fine music, a treasured hymnology, no architectural effects to incline men's hearts to worship, no long-estab-

lished traditions, no prepared souls nurtured and cultured in Christian atmosphere, nothing indeed but his own self, an aggressive member perhaps of what must have been to most of those to whom he preached either a perfectly unknown or an insignificant sect—himself—in a vast empire whose spirit was the very antithesis of what he preached—and that which he came to call the Spirit of God.

He preached Jesus Christ and Him crucified, not a philosophy but a Person, and at that, a crucified Person. I believe with Prof. Massie in the Century Bible commentary that the rendering, "I determined not to know anything among you," may leave a too sweeping and exclusive impression on our minds and really leads away from the true inwardness of Paul's thought. His thought here corresponds with what we have contended above. Massie puts it, "I came to no decision to know. I did not trouble myself to discuss or decide whether I should let it be seen that I knew anything beyond this." He did not even protect himself so far as to let people know that he was aware of other relative knowledge which was commonly recognized. I suppose this was the result of a discovery from the experiment of preaching, and Mars Hill will occur to us as a good example.

At the same time no thoughtful person will ever be led into the folly of concluding from this and similar affirmations on the part of Paul, that he confined his preaching to the relating of certain historic facts about Jesus, or even recounting marvellous happenings, the result of the acceptance of such facts. The thing to observe and mark

above everything else is that Paul perceived, and *accepted for himself unreservedly*, the principle of life at work in such facts. Facts fail us always unless they produce a philosophy which in some way satisfies the intellect and proves a working thesis of life. The mystery of the Cross of Christ is for Paul that principle laid deep in the foundation of ordained being, that not by pride of intellect, nor by signs or wonders can we ever know or reveal God ; but by the sublimest identification of the highest with the lowest does that creative action begin, by which, through active participation in it and venture of faith upon it, we discover ourselves in fellowship with what God Himself is, and we become empowered with His power. We miss a most important point in the understanding of Paul if we fail to realize that preaching itself was a vivid exemplification of this principle at work. Preaching was sheer foolishness as the Cross itself was.

PAUL'S PREACHING : ITS OUTWARD REGARD

Prof. Shailer Mathews has asked this question : " Men are justified by faith and by faith alone, according to Paul. What faith ? " And he answers his own question by saying, " The answer of Paul is exceedingly simple : the acceptance of Jesus as Lord—that is, as Christ—involving as it did the belief that God raised Him from the dead. That the initiatory acceptance of Jesus at the Messianic valuation would grow richer and more inclusive is beyond question, but there was no

condemnation for the man who so accepted Jesus. Faith, then, is for Paul not a matter of mysticism, neither is it that which is something exclusively religious. It is the yielding of one's entire life to an interpretation of the historical Jesus. Strictly speaking, its ethical content is derived from the character of Jesus. He who believed that Jesus is the Christ first of all needed to repent from his sins, and, in the second place, found in Jesus' own life both on earth and in heaven the basis of moral control. In the same proportion as one's interpretation grew richer would His personality and the bearing of the facts of His life upon conduct grow more intense. But the larger faith was with Paul a matter of Christian growth due to the in-working of the Spirit. And in this Spiritual life lay the ground for assurance.[1] . . ." These are good words, containing as they do most of the elements we expect, but they are scarcely good enough. There can be no hesitation in assuming that Paul's Christian life and all Christian life is a matter of growth. But there is no mathematical precision, no ordered march of the sequence of experiences traceable in Paul's Christianity as implied here. At no time in the history of his active ministry, at least, do we find his faith a mere acceptance of an historical interpretation of Jesus, unless we include in that interpretation elements not strictly historical. There is always venture as well as intellectual acquiescence in his faith, but more important, there is a knowledge which can never be put in the categories of historic fact. Faith, for him, is truly

[1] "The Messianic Hope in the New Testament," p. 194.

not a mere matter of mysticism, especially if we mean that nature type or nebulous kind we find in the mystery cults; but if we mean that in and around the facts which constitute the Christian persuasion there is a mysterious, unreachable but energizing somewhat as their very essence, then we must be allowed to infer that Paul was a mystic *par excellence*.

Neither is repentance with Paul a consequence following the acceptance of an intellectual interpretation of Jesus, nor something to be done by command of Will ; but often a coincident of faith, a cause as well as an effect, all of which at times seems to be the result of other, higher working. Moreover it cannot be said that the word " basis " as used here is a happy one. We get no evidence in New Testament times of anything which savours of a programme, of any clarity of consent as to the moral qualities of Jesus—on earth or in heaven, whatever this may mean—which might be expected if Christians were making it a point to attain to that moral control possessed by Jesus. This may seem strange, but it should be admitted that it is one of the strange things about that early Christianity. The explanation lies in the fact that the emphasis was laid elsewhere. Paul most certainly had a deep regard for the morals and conduct of his people, nevertheless there is nothing in all his letters to cause us to think of him as a teacher of Christian morality and ethics. The supreme purpose of Christian activity in the early Church was to bear testimony to Christ and the power of the Spirit; and if we to-day could truly appreciate it,

Paul and his associates in a most astonishing way entrusted these most important matters of life and conduct to the individual or communal discernment, the growing illumination, as mentioned in the first section, of men and women in whom the Spirit dwelt because of their belief in Christ. It was love of and gratitude and devotion to Christ, the peculiar work of the Spirit, which constituted the mainspring and the constraining and restraining power of the Christian life in its morals and conduct as in all other things.

The Corinthian Church seems to have been peculiarly privileged in this respect, in that it managed—evidently by special request—to get Paul's definite mind relative to matters pertaining to the private and more intimate relationships of life ; and probably it seems needful here to venture the claim that much of the criticism which in recent years has been directed against the Apostle Paul because of his reputed theories on social ethics is very much beside the mark. As a matter of fact Paul had no theoretic social ethics, and there is no reason to believe that the energy of his mind was ever given to the solution of such matters. He applied himself here, as in other places no doubt, in Christian wisdom to concrete cases which came before him, as a wise guide looking to the immediate interest of men's and women's peace of mind and the welfare of their souls. In a number of cases he makes it clear in this so-called first letter to the Corinthians that he does not pretend to speak with certain authority, but is giving only his honest but enlightened opinion. Such candour should

acquit Paul of any appearance of dogmatism in the matters of morals or ethics.

We are also aware that Paul was limited by his apocalyptic conceptions of life, and prevented because of these from giving us the benefit of his enriched mind in matters which could only have had special moment for him in contemplation of an organized and continued Church expanding and developing in the world. Although Paul is no other than the real founder of the Church, it will hardly be claimed that it was at any time his conscious purpose to be so. His apocalyptic vision and Rabbinic eschatology remained with him in varying degrees of intensity throughout his life. So far as we may judge from his letters, these present us with a mind—if we are to think of the intellectual framework in which he clothed his religious experience—in the evident process of change from a more or less Judaic Christianity to a purely spiritual conception of the Christian religion, and, though his spirit was free, probably it would be too much to claim or expect that he ever entirely won his intellectual freedom. I mean by this that he continued throughout his life to express at times his spiritual religion in materialistic forms of thought.

It was left to Paul's successor, the writer of the Gospel of John, to breathe his spirit into intellectual moulds more in harmony with the true nature of that spirit. The Church, the body of Christ, so far as organization is concerned, was of the simplest possible nature, a matter of expediency and necessity. His calling, as he conceived it, was to proclaim the Gospel of Christ to any and all, and it proved the

power of salvation to those who believed ; all else was subordinate and auxiliary only to that work. At the same time, his discussions on the various questions which come before us in the latter portions of 1 Corinthians, marriage and impurity, divorce, meats offered to idols, position of women, even the Lord's Supper, the matter of Spiritual gifts, and the Resurrection, make it plain that for Paul religion without morality, or even without true manners and customs, without regard to the quiet dignity of life, is nothing less than a meaningless thing. His insistent attitude towards offenders in this Church, despite the obstinate opposition, is proof of the imperative value he put on these matters.

Were Paul living to-day, it would be a matter of greatest moment to him if the morals and manners of our social life, if the ethics of our business, economic or political life were not in harmony with our Christian profession and the light that the Spirit has shed upon our age. I am not sure that he would be fascinated by our methods or our religio-political adventures. The lure of any easy solution did not appeal to Paul any more than it did to Jesus ; but he would make the impact of the Christian truth be felt through all the ramifications of life to its outer borders, and this at the risk of reducing the Christian membership to its irreducible minimum. Just so great and true a Christian we have a right to believe Paul was, and such Christianity to-day would not want for adherents.

Furthermore, these discussions also deserve this great approbation, that they are surely of the char-

acter and Spirit of Jesus in yet another way. Paul approaches them by that impulse and in that condition of mind vital to all Christianity, and to any satisfactory solution of such problems. A new principle was at work revealing itself in practical activity as a higher kind of love, the creation of God's Spirit. All questions of conduct and other problems were by Paul referred to this new vitality which he felt all Christians should recognize and approve, and in Corinth we eventually find that such a principle was working and that his faith in them and in the peculiar power of the Spirit was not groundless.

PAUL'S PREACHING, AND CERTAIN INFERENCES TO BE DRAWN

So much may be said for Paul's preaching. Certain impressions lie on our minds and certain inferences may legitimately be made. *First.* The effectiveness of Apostolic preaching was, as we should expect, not due to the art with which its message was embellished or delivered, nor to its force of reasonableness, nor to the strength of passion employed, either honest or insincere, nor to the exceeding correctness of the preacher's interpretation of Scripture or of the Person and work of Christ. It is patent that any or all of these may be conditions of the best preaching, but they are none of them *the* condition of preaching Christ. *That condition is a certain attitude of soul to God which seems to release the powers of God Himself.* If anything in the world may be said to be exclusively

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our own, it is this. No other eyes may look upon it, or judge in us its absence or its presence. It is in reality what the New Testament called "*Belief in God*" through Christ. It never responds to command, it is hard to woo. It is often more near when we, like Vincent as it were, let go; but with its presence the preacher is in the realms of faith, of genius, of the miraculous, as Mrs. Oliphant claims. Simple words become spirit and life, prayer is carried on angel wings, for the soul of man is moved by powers of God.

The most vital thing in our preaching is our own character. The peculiar atmosphere of true preaching is the effluence not necessarily of strong or inviting or charming personalities, but of Christian personalities ; which may, indeed, be a very different thing.

Secondly. Paul, in fact, makes his preaching, if we have interpreted its nature aright, the *crux* of his defence, and this in the face of the Corinthians' accusation that they had found it very poor. "For though ye have ten thousand tutors in Christ, (have ye) not many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I begat you through the Gospel." Amazingly pertinent and audacious words these ! But they bear further witness to the contention made before, that preaching carries in itself the process of pain, travail, defeat to self, faith and hope which in the Cross itself is the begetter of life.

And it is this preaching for which people are waiting. Controversy and self-sufficiency soon die in its presence. Men and women all over this land and others are beginning to weary a little of

the man-assumed confidence and knowledge and programme by which we are so often proposing to bring about the Kingdom of God. One of the most commendable policies of the Church in the last generation or two is its world-wide missionary endeavour. This policy, or perhaps better, missionary effort in general, has been attended by remarkable results already, chiefly due to the fact that the exigencies and necessities of missionary life precipitate sharper and more venturous spiritual decisions and compel a more implicit trust in God, something akin to that which we find in Paul. The value of missions also admittedly reaches far beyond the strict interests of the Church itself, and in political and international spheres that value is likely to be appreciated more and more. Converging forces will, no doubt, bear hard upon this work in the near future, but in the long run not to imperil it so much as to reveal and demonstrate its enduring worth. Such enterprise is native Christianity in action, and is probably the most promising symptom and will prove the supreme statesmanship of modern civilization, its distinguishing achievement.

And yet, when all this is recognized, its continued prosperity rests in the hope of preserving intact and undiminished the native elements of Christian faith, an inner conviction that this cause is supremely God's and not ours, and more than a suspicion that God works mighty works in the hearts of men and in the affairs of nations, and especially in ways which are beyond our knowledge altogether. A missionary from China some few years ago ventured the

opinion to the writer that there was something wrong with Christianity in Canada, and in explanation of her feeling said, " I am not sure what it is that seems to be lacking; but I am always given the impression that they are doing it all themselves." It would seem sometimes that the Church is disguising her real soul in Budget standards and achievements, that she is determined to dissipate the energy of her servants in manifold work to the despair of attending to and protecting the one essential—the minister's own " belief in God." Preaching, if we are to understand it as Paul understood it—to be a justifiable activity at all, or especially, to provide the crowning evidence of a defence of true Christianity—ought to be, more absolutely than almost anything else, the true and natural expression of a strangely real belief in God. As has already been suggested, such a belief in God comes to be our possession neither from objective demonstrations of spiritual beliefs nor from the lead of subjective idealism. Nor is it even so likely to be procured, secured, and made our very own through an intense and consistent activity in the " busy-ness " of Church life.

It is no presumption to claim, if we are to take Paul's experience as normal Christian experience, that the Church of to-day needs, above all other things, a message—a message born of a knowledge of God rather than one drawn from a survey of the ailments of men. And at the same time, a message with an ethical import and challenge, determined primarily by this knowledge (consciousness) of God, but as vitally related to the real moral challenge

of our day—great ideas already afloat or emerging in the minds of men everywhere, through the providences of life and the Spirit of God—as, we believe, was the Apostle's to the challenge of his day. Possibly we are suffering from the fact that we are not courageous enough to proclaim the ethical implications of our modern religious experience. These two great things, ethics and religion, must not ever get out of touch with each other in the line of march, and any true ethic just as surely as any true religion will have its source and find its character primarily in a consciousness and knowledge of God. It was so, both with Jesus and Paul.

Probably there are thousands of people in every Christian land, particularly after our war experiences, outside our Christian institutions, who know more of one secret, at least, of Jesus and Paul, viz., that mysterious strength and calm which comes and dwells in the hearts of men, who in the face of terrible odds, physical, mental or spiritual, have chosen to fight rather than to quit, chosen to believe in the goodness of life rather than to despair—know more from such true action of life's true meaningfulness than many thousand others trained so slavishly in the laborious methods of our modern Church life. So much of this latter, to many people, seems far away from real life, and too much "methodology" in any case is doomed to produce mediocrity.

These many other people, meeting day by day and year by year life's realisms, are too often outside our churches, explain it as we will; but

though they may not name the name of Jesus with us, can we honestly continue to believe that they do not in some sense know Him, which is far better? Nevertheless can we, at the same time, be persuaded that they know Him as He is to be known, and are they themselves satisfied with their knowledge? George McDonald in "David Elginbrod" reminds us of a deft truth. He writes, "the Kingdom of Heaven is not come near, when God's will is our law; it is come when God's will is our will. While God's will is our law, we are but a kind of noble slaves; when His will is our will we are free children." Donald Hankey had not reached far enough when he told us "religion is betting our whole life that there is a God." No! the longer we live, the more we are persuaded that there is everything in an attitude, and nowhere do what seem the slightest qualitative variations produce such remarkable differences as in the field of religious experience, especially in our varied attitudes to God.

Paul met the common duties of life as bravely as the ordinary man; he met the full challenge of those words of Donald Hankey, for he wagered his whole existence on Jesus Christ, but his comfort or confidence is as much in knowledge as in faith and hope. He is convinced that the Spirit of God finds intercourse with the spirit of man in such a way and of such a nature that it is its own vindication, and religion is not just the noblest of wagers. It is not in the set of stoical indifference or discipline, but in the relax of acceptance someway, that faith's truest constituent is found and expressed, where

men in full assurance are impelled to cry, "Abba, Father." The soul of religion lies in a consciousness of God, *the Father*; and all preaching which is quickening seems to be the product of such a consciousness.

Let me quote from Prof. Dobschütz, and in fullest accord with all that he claims. What he so finely expresses in regard to Jesus is equally true of Paul, or perhaps, for Paul because of Jesus. "In the last twenty years," he says, "there has been a great change as regards Jesus' teaching —or rather our view of religion has been changed by rediscovering that morals, however important in religion, are not 'the' religion; that there is in religion something beyond all that is moral, intellectual, æsthetic, some real intercourse with God. We may call this mysticism, only that it is not mysticism in the strict sense of the word with a materialistic notion about Deity as its basis, and including some materialistic means of intercourse with the divine. In Judaism, certainly, this element of nature religion had been cast away long before, and it came into Christianity only late through pagan influence. It marks the position of Jesus in the history of religion that He is the culmination of that line of religion which has broken off all relation to the primitive cult of nature and has put in its place the idea of God's moral holiness, and that to do the will of God makes a man religious. But, as we have remarked, to do the will of God is not in itself the religion, but a part of it, or rather, a consequence of it. *The centre of religion is a real experience of God's presence and helpfulness, of His*

grace and mercy. And this is what we find in complete fullness in Jesus. It is only by taking account of this fundamental part of Jesus' doctrine that we can hope to approach His own meaning as well as His position in the history of mankind. Jesus' teaching deals not so much with morals, however important the moral element of His teaching may be. He preaches a new relation of God to man, and of man to God, or better He brings, He represents, this new relation."

This new relation, I take it, is the possibility for men of *that consciousness of God as their Father.* Could we describe it, we would have defined the finest thing, the most delicate and informing experience of life—pure religion. It is that possession of God which comes through what the ages have called " trust," if the very familiarity of the word does not spoil its meaning for us, and if we can think of it in a large enough sense. There is nothing of striving in it, of seeking for God; it is reposing willingly and cheerfully in the activity of the duties and obligations to which Christ's life and spirit lead us; it is taking to ourselves the happenings, events, accidents and fortunes of life (which do not come through sin—yes, and I think I should say which come through sin and the worst of sins) as great friendly things which mean us infinitely well; it is letting our past, present and future, in very deed, dwell in God. And, curiously enough, this experience unfolds in a greater knowledge of God, and in a new morality and ethic which are themselves the results of this new know-

ledge, and which become the creative potencies of our new and higher beings.

Such would seem to be the appointed order of the soul's progress in Christ, and such is that venture of faith which is the secret of the personality and the preaching of the Apostle Paul, and of many multitudes beside in all ages and in manifold other activities who have possessed a similar confidence in the power of the Christian religion.

CHAPTER VI

The Basis of His Defence

HIS SPIRITUALIZED CHARACTER

Paul in his justification of himself is calm, and he writes with dignity ; nevertheless, his words give evidence that the Corinthian attitude to him has hurt, has touched him to the quick. His very disclaimer, " For with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you or of man's judgment," is as much a confirmation as a denial of how he is hurt. But it is also more than that, it is a subtle drawing of the whole matter to that place where the worth of men is decided by a judgment-value which is ultimate so far as anything can be so. Paul reveals no littleness of any kind, no sentimental disgust, no easy scepticism : nor on the other hand does he assume any false modesty nor in any way show a desire to ingratiate himself into their regard. He feels conscious of his strength, rather of his sense of God and the reality of the powers which he has been privileged to exercise, because of his knowledge and experience of God and the conscientiousness with which he has fulfilled the responsibilities involved.

If the *crux* of his defence lies in his preaching and its attested results, the *basis* of that defence

lies deeper in what might be called his conscious *spiritualized character*. Probably we have no more poignant words from the pen of Paul anywhere than those with which he introduces the fourth chapter. " Let a man so account of us as ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Here, moreover, it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful (trustworthy)." The very simplicity of the statement is its power. The Rev. J. A. Hutton in a sermon makes this observation on these words : " That is one of those sayings which are so simple and indisputable as to approach to genius." " It is like saying a man shall be a man ; or a Christian shall be a Christian." The words reveal the power of reducing a complex thing like life to its irreducible essence. The people had become coldly critical towards him, and the Apostle does not mistake the meaning of their attitude. It implies, whether deliberately or not, that they accuse him of not being so great as he had made them to believe ; whether or not there is the added accusation of pretence on his part I shall not venture to say. Paul's answer is that the things which admittedly are not our own are gifts, and the least that may be expected is that the recipient be trustworthy.

In the first place, I feel that we gather the power of Paul's words by remembering that the deepest element in trustworthiness is simple honesty. This conception of honesty is very much present in all of Paul's writings, as revealed in his repeated use of a term like a " clear conscience " sometimes before men, and more often as in the sight of God,

as well as the words meaning "excellent," "irreproachable," or "straightforward," in reference to his own character and that of others. So that we are justified in believing that simple honesty was a thing very near to the motive and whole endeavour of Paul's life. When addressing Timothy, when he (Timothy) is in the beginning of his Christian ministry, and over whom Paul is apparently a little anxious, he speaks these words: "Warn certain individuals against teaching novelties and studying myths and interminable genealogies; such studies bear upon speculation rather than on the divine order which belongs to faith. Whereas the aim of Christian discipline is the love that springs from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from a sincere faith." And again, "I transmit these instructions to you, Timotheus my son, in accordance with what the prophets said who first directed me to you; fight the good fight on these lines, keeping hold of faith and a good conscience" (Moffatt). Such words of advice to a youthful minister reveal, as hardly anything else could do, what was uppermost in Paul's own mind as the cause of any success which had been his. He does not imply that such a condition of heart is easily acquired (probably if we could consult his mind on the matter, especially so far as religion is concerned, he found it one of the most difficult of tasks), but it is necessary; so much so, that it is that place from which all effective Christianity begins. We probably do not advance at all in the great realities of life until our Christian experience and spiritual activity find themselves registered in this.

And he would appear to mean two things : first, not claiming or appearing to claim to be that or possess that which we are not or have not, and second, not claiming as our own that which is entirely given to us.

These arresting words are not only the basis upon which he would establish his defence, but they provide the opening sentence of a passage of sarcastic utterances which Prof. Ramsay thinks is hardly to be paralleled in power in any literature. It is difficult, indeed, to appreciate the consummate skill with which he brings all their contentions and high satisfactions to utter ruin by caustic contrast of their unreal position with the simple touchstone of character itself. Moreover, it probably ought to serve as the most penetrating and humiliating challenge to us who labour in the ministry of Christ.

The writer was told a while ago of a minister—to whom it should be said his people are very much devoted—who on being taken to task for teaching a very literal and materialistic conception of Christ's second coming, gave as his excuse that people liked that kind of preaching. Now Paul, I am sure, would find no fault with this young man on the score of the " matter " of his sermons, for undoubtedly he himself often preached something of the same ; but on the score of the " reason " given I am inclined to believe he would heartily wish him anathema ! That peculiar mark of authority attending the words of some men as compared with many others, is due to the fact that through labour, sacrifice and courage, they have

come to conclusions with themselves in what they must believe and teach after having sincerely discovered and faced what they themselves are. They have appreciated to some extent the awful responsibility of life and thought.

Can we say that any other man has a gospel, even though it be true that other faculties permit him to present acceptably the accredited truths of Christianity? At any rate to take such work less seriously is nothing less than sin, destructive of our own inner character and perversive of all true religion. Even a very inadequate and immature gospel, the result of sincerity and of good faith with God and man, will and does work the works of Christ on earth; for it is a greater thing to be sincere than right. Probably we can never be totally and entirely right, but there are moments given us when we are thoroughly and altogether sincere. Besides, it is sincerity and not knowledge which is contagious in the realms of life and truth. Such preaching is not often popular but it is quickening, and it alone builds up all true character and paves the way for any trustworthy foundation for the Kingdom of God on earth.

In fact, life seems to be so ordered in the moral and spiritual world, as it is in the physical, that it is by the process of elimination we arrive at the truth from which we may go forward. In science, this is axiomatic; in religion and morals we need not expect God is any less sincere and exacting, so that we dare think that any kind of sentimentalism or emotionalism or intellectualism will land us high and dry in the Kingdom of His everlasting Truth. And

Paul in this is not more discriminating than was Jesus Himself. Furthermore, this same spirit impels Paul, in utter disregard of consequences, to disclose all the truth he knows of God. We remember him at Miletus on that fateful journey to Jerusalem, bound in the Spirit, yet fully apprised of the dangers none of which moves him, giving this strange reason for his confidence and strength : " Wherefore I take you to record this day that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God " (Acts xx, 26, 27).

It is this completeness, this uncompromising and encompassing loyalty to all that God meant to him, which gives rise to that creative power of his wonderful personality. Something just less than this makes a person not, as we might naturally suppose, merely a trifle less effective, but a different person altogether. It is truly one thing only that is needed to transform all life and character, that unadulterated honesty which, despite our easy views of it, is so difficult to attain. Such unsophisticated reality would do more than any other thing to rehabilitate the Church in the eyes of the world.

Secondly, the words of Paul remind us that trustworthiness is, if possible, even a more imperative thing when all that we are and stand for in Christianity is something of which we are entirely recipients. Probably there is nothing more impressive in Pauline writing than the evident conviction that everything which constitutes a Christian content, to be apprehended in distinction

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to all other things of which men have knowledge, is something "given." For a number of years it has been the growing feeling of the writer that this fact should supply the most arresting and sobering note not only of Paul's epistles but of the whole New Testament evangel. It surely was a truth above many others which Jesus never tired of insisting upon in connection with the coming Kingdom and its character.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD AS SOMETHING GIVEN

In the very introduction of Jesus' ministry we find His call to repentance, that men might realize the presence of this Kingdom, and, if we are to accept Mark's version (Mark i, 15), that men, indeed, might be enabled to believe the gospel. Repentance does not necessarily bring something, but provides a condition by which we see and believe that to which we were hitherto oblivious. That Kingdom was something which after a certain condition was fulfilled—a seed sown, a man might sleep and rise night and day and the seed would itself spring and grow up, he knowing not how; for the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself (Mark iv, 27, 28). This must mean that in Jesus' mind the Kingdom was of such a nature that man had a most inconsequent part, though an absolutely necessary one, to play in producing it. Matthew has assembled a number of parables in the thirteenth chapter of his gospel, the striking thought of which, in almost every case, will bear the same or similar interpretation. Tares may grow up among the

wheat ; but the harvest will inevitably come and the wheat will reveal its identity and worth by some quality belonging to itself. The Kingdom is like the very smallest seed, but with potentialities incalculable. It is like leaven buried deep in meal, but with strange pervasive and eruptive powers. It is like something *to be discovered*, a treasure hidden in a field, or a pearl of great price in a market-place, and once discovered, causes an eagerness to buy the whole field at the price of all else, or a willingness to dispense with a lifetime's gatherings to get possession of this one pearl. Jesus can only mean one of two things, or both, by such striking parables. Either the Kingdom of God represents a realm where phenomenal, new forces are set in motion for us, or its presence provides a condition by which the ordinary things of life are seen in a marvellously new way ; and in both cases the inference is that the all-important thing is given, not acquired.

Even when Jesus is talking of other matters, warning His hearers of over-anxiety for instance, He uses phrases which betray the same conception of life : " Ye, by being anxious, cannot add one cubit to your stature," " Behold the lilies how they grow, they toil not neither do they spin, and yet I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore if God so clothe the grass of the field," etc. Who can refrain from believing that it is Jesus' spiritual conception of life which pervades His teaching about these simple matters of faith and behaviour in the ordinary affairs of life ?

Then again, in numerous recorded incidents where He marvels at the disciples' lack of faith, He gives the unmistakable impression that these men by want of faith are in some way denying themselves possibilities of life and powers, immeasurably great and good. On two occasions only does Jesus eulogize faith, and in both cases, strangely enough, they were foreigners whose faith He recognized. The evident reason for this peculiar recognition was due to the fact that the Centurion, on the one hand, recognized in Himself One who had authority, i.e., One Who was in touch with a higher order of being ; and the Syro-Phœnician woman, on the other hand, recognized the infinite possibilities and worth of little things, as in her tart reply about the dogs and crumbs from the Master's table she reveals her deep satisfaction, and her conviction of the priceless value of the most inconsiderable considerations from One like Himself.

Surely in His outburst of appreciation of these people and their faith we see uncovered the deepest view of Jesus' own conception of faith and that which issues from it. He believed that there were ready to emerge into life undreamed-of resources or powers if men could only be prepared, and the preparation was that state of mind which He chose to call "Faith." "Faith," or its equivalents in the mouth of Jesus, it is true, suggests many attitudes of soul, sometimes to life and its responsibilities, and at other times to His own Person. Nevertheless if an utter stranger to our gospels were to read them unbiased by any traditional

guidance, I venture to believe that he would be supremely impressed with this truth, that the essence of faith for Jesus is that disposition of soul which refuses to be compassed by this world, which anticipates the possibility of the emergence of higher powers to interpenetrate our lives, or which is able to educe something by which the values of this world, great and small, are radically transmuted and transformed. The world for Him would seem to be that system of thought, of feeling, that atmosphere of convention into which we settle ourselves and ordinarily live, which encompass life ; and which, indeed, are to be counted a " possible " for us to expect or believe in. And Faith was the spirit of man triumphing over this bondage. Nothing, at any rate, is more obvious on the face of the records than the fact that the superlative values and worth of life for Jesus were something which men could not think out, earn or achieve for themselves, except in so far as they could condition their minds for their reception.

This is surely a supreme teaching of Jesus. Not only so, He Himself lived and worked in the power of that expectancy and experience. Such was this consciousness of God, we might say, which more than any other feature of His life impressed those who knew Him. In time as they got to know and experience the power of His glorified Self upon their own lives, men came to say *He was Himself God's unspeakable Gift;* and they undoubtedly meant to convey the conviction that He was a Gift transcendent from above.

CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE AS A GIFT OF GOD

In Paul's writings we are confronted with a different language, with thought—concepts harder to understand and more technical—and I am inclined to believe that this was of necessity so—but his mind is labouring with and his soul rejoicing in the same great experience. Possibly in few other respects does the spirit of Paul draw to such near kinship with the Spirit of Jesus. The constant reiteration in manifold forms, throughout his epistles, that it is by grace, gifts of God, that Christians are what they are, does not simply mean that they are such theoretically, by determination of the purposes of God, but they become this consciously, experimentally, in actuality. If words convey any true meaning at all, the second, third and fourth chapters of 1 Corinthians are a supreme endeavour on the part of the Apostle to bring these Corinthians to the very foundation of their distinctive existence as Christians, to the common acknowledgment with him that all have been touched by nothing less than the Spirit of God.

Prof. Massie says, "This (new principle) does not imply a mere illumination, or a sanctifying influence ; but, if I may call it, a transformation in the substance of our being. The Spirit becomes us and we become essentially Spirit." Though Luke's version of Jesus' words about prayer, "How much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit (good things, Matt. vii, 11) to them that ask Him" (Luke xi, 13), may be legitimately considered a reflection from the later Church, it at the same

time justifies us in believing that Paul was more or less in accord with the early Church in thought, language and emphasis, and that the Holy Spirit had become for them a supreme gift of God, the gift perhaps which gave to all other gifts a transformed value. Such a view of religion, of course, destroys any reason we might wish to have for personal congratulation, and determines the Christian life itself as a sheer gift from God.

In the chapters above-mentioned this claim is strengthened by the continued use of words such as Mystery and Wisdom which are probably intended to convey something of the same meaning (1 Cor. ii, 7), only the first seems to lay stress on the purposes of God, as a fact or in process, while the latter emphasizes their content and peculiar effects, as apprehended by the mind of man. These are the deep things of God, values unsearchable and indefinable except as God shows them, things which have never been known ; and the implication is that they cannot be known by the senses or even by the intellect, but that this knowledge is sensible to us only by the presence of that Love in our hearts which itself is dependent on and conditioned by the Spirit of God (1 Cor. ii, 9, 10). When Paul speaks in Romans v, 5, of " the Love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost," he is referring to the same experience. But Christians alone have received this Spirit, and can interpret God and judge men and all things because of it, as the natural man cannot at all. This is, indeed, the normal mind of Paul and I believe also of early Christianity ; and though

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we to-day may find it difficult to confine ourselves to his peculiar terminology, there is little doubt but that the substance of his thinking is very truth. It is the consciousness of this in generation after generation of Christian people which has given continuity to the Christian Church. In the third chapter, after reminding them of the inabilities of carnally-minded people, he asserts the truth of the sovereign place of God in the labours of himself and all other men by a three-fold illustration. In the garden, it is God who giveth the increase. In the building, the foundation is all important, and Christ is that foundation. In our own persons, our bodies and lives are but the temples where the Spirit of God may dwell. In view of this, surely no Christian may glory in men. In the fourth chapter, he asks them what there is that they have not received, and if they differ in the quality of their life and gifts, who made them to differ? Mere words could hardly convey a stronger impression of Paul's conviction that the Christian life is supremely a work, an achievement of God. Paul is conscious of being in possession of what in the beginning of this discussion I have ventured to call a spiritualized character, by which he has the power to judge men and life and values of life with the judgment of God, and his own defence finds its certitude in this experience.[1]

If we could reduce to its finest parts the thought content of the words mysteries, revelation, etc.,

[1] Prof. McFadyen (The Interpreter's Commentary, Hodder & Stoughton, p. 44) points out that: "But while the spiritual man tests everything, he is not himself capable of being tested by anyone who is not spiritual."

we should probably have gone a long way in a definition of the Apostle and his conception of the religion of Christ. But, of course, this is the great difficulty ; the best of commentaries do not seem to satisfy us, failing, as they do, to give body or to clothe with flesh and blood what undoubtedly constitutes part of the framework of Paul's experience. Paul himself does not make it easy, for he uses the term " mystery " in various forms, and refers to many different aspects of it. It is something hidden, yet not meant to be concealed, but purposed to be revealed and not acquired (1 Cor. iii, 7 ; Eph. iii, 9). It is not something external to life in the sense that man cannot intelligently apprehend it (1 Cor. iv, 1, " secret truths ", 1 Cor. xiii, 2, " mysteries associated with knowledge "), but it is never a mere subjective creation evolved from the lead of some ideal or aspiration. It never seems to mean something to be taken on faith unless 1 Cor. xv, 51 suggests that, nor is it used in that sense since associated with the sacraments of the Church.

He refers it, at times, to the counsels of God which until now have been reserved unto Himself (Rom. xvi, 25 ; 1 Cor. xv, 31 ; Eph. i, 9), and then again, to that by which human nature is reconciled unto God, and once more to those hidden plans by which God purposes the redemption of the Gentile world (Col. i, 26-27, Eph. iii, 3-6, Eph. iii, 9), and in Romans xvi, 25 this redemption would seem to have been made possible by the partial blindness of Israel. In 1 Cor. xiv, 2, it refers to secret truths, revealed by the Spirit and

spoken in tongues to God ; evidently he thinks of those movements of the soul to God which language cannot express. In Col. ii, 2-3 it is associated with all that enriched life of comfort, love and certainty as well as wisdom and knowledge which is in God through Christ ; and in Col. iv, 3 it is equivalent to the peculiar truth which is in Christ, as is also the case in Eph. vi, 19 ; and in 1 Timothy iii, 9, it would seem to be identified with those qualities of character which come from faith and a clear conscience, while in 1 Timothy iii, 16 it is identified with the profound wonder of the whole revelation of Christ and His claims, which are justified by His Spirit.

The reader will see for himself the variety of experiences which Paul denotes by the term " mystery." He will also understand the difficulty of defining Paul's meaning in any one term or of appreciating at all some of the aspects in which he sets it forth ; but he will also recognize that it all has to do with the grace of God and not with the achievements of man.

As a matter of fact, is it incumbent on us to confine our thoughts concerning it to certain aspects of this great experience which happen to be particularized by Paul for reasons that are obvious ? His peculiar work determined his attention to certain things ; but the quality of knowledge, or character of consciousness, which he calls " mystery " is an affection of the whole Christian experience, or indeed, it is that experience. It is simpler, more intimate, and infinitely more than all Paul emphasizes, and it belongs to all Christian

souls in some measure, and therefore is difficult to co-ordinate and describe.

As Robert Elsmere says to a friend in his dying contemplation, " I like the French saying ' *Quand on me demande ce que c'est que Dieu, je l'ignore ; quand on ne me demande pas je le sais très bien !*' No ! we cannot realize Him in words. We can only live in Him and die in Him." So it is with the Spirit of God, and the truth of life its presence brings to the soul of man.

Innumerable lights and shadows are the result of one sun in the heaven ; and these things cannot be described, they are the result of the presence or absence of their source. Christianity, in its innumerable lights and shadows too, is the result of the soul's contact with ultimate Reality itself—and something come between the soul and that supreme Reality. One supreme thing, however, to be always insisted upon, is that such revelation issues in ethical qualities and values in no way divorced from human life, but in most vital relation to it, in impelling love for man and to God. This, indeed, is decisive in all that may be called Paul's mystical union with Christ, and for ever prohibits our identifying Paul's mysticism with that of contemporaneous mystery cults. Possibly one of the greatest difficulties of Paul's active ministry was to distinguish two quite distinguishable things, which could adequately be expressed in the same language, and could not very well be expressed in any other.

In conclusion let me say : the trouble in the Church of Corinth came from the fact that there

was little true gratitude there. I do not mean gratitude to men, although what looks like devotion to men at Corinth is not the same as true gratitude ; but I mean gratitude to God. It was from the lack of such that Paul had to identify his defence with a consideration of fundamental Christian principles which led him into a discussion of preaching. How gratitude to God comes to be an experience of men is one of the mysteries. Gratitude, like some other great experiences of life, weeping or rejoicing for example, does not come by command, nor by act of will. These are not artificially created, but are concomitant with some other even greater things. Nevertheless, on the fields of gratitude have grown almost all the goodly things this world has known, and surely every Christian virtue has found its source in gratitude to God. Without it, Christianity seems inane, and never succeeds in propagating its real self. In its absence we have little success in constructing true theology, in guiding conduct or inducing befitting manners. It was the fullness of this in the early Church which gave motive and power to its life. Perhaps it is by gratitude to God, rather than by creeds or works, that we should test our healthfulness to-day.

" Jesus, these eyes have never seen
That radiant form of Thine ;
The veil of sense hangs dark between
Thy blessed face and mine.

I see Thee not, I hear Thee not,
Yet art Thou oft with me ;
And earth has ne'er so dear a spot
As where I meet with Thee."

PART III

CONCILIATION AND DISCRIMINATION

CHAPTER VII

Two Kinds of Knowledge

"The conquest of love, honour, men's confidence—the pride of it, the power of it, are fit materials for a heroic tale; only our minds are struck with the externals of such a success, and to Jim's successes there were no externals. Thirty miles of forest shut it off from an indifferent world, and the noise of the white surf along the coast overpowered the voice of fame." So speaks Joseph Conrad of Lord Jim, and again he writes: "What more can I want? If you ask them who is brave—who is true—who is just—who it is they would trust with their lives?—they would say, Tuan Jim. And yet they can never know the real, real truth—They can't be made to understand what is going on in me——" The point, however, is that of all mankind, Jim had no dealings but with himself, and the question is whether at the last he had not confessed to a faith mightier than the laws of order and progress.

I wonder if it is not always so, in any greatness of human life. There is an eternal mystery in our moral nature; I am not quite sure that I have ever been clear to myself as to what I ought to mean by spiritual life—its mystery too seems insoluble. Sometimes we seem to starve our

spirits to feed our intellect, to explain our morals. But the truth of life, its power, lies somewhere in our exalted Self, in the pure, true, crystal spirit which transcends it all. We have grown afraid of too self-conscious religion, and so we ought ; but in a great, *great* sense, religion, true life, must always be a thing of Self, of heights and depths, of conquests won within, in response to a call inexplicable. With the insolvency of Self, life becomes poor indeed ; but though the greatest achievements of Self are lost to an indifferent world, too subtle for the voice of fame, they have their reward—they conquer the confidence of men, they express the hidden Will of God Himself, they know the *power* of Love and Truth.

In chapters v to xvi inclusive of 1 Corinthians, we see Paul concerned with practical matters of life and conduct, of Church and destiny : of immorality, of relations between husbands and wives, of differences between neighbours in the Christian community, of marriage and celibacy, of slaves and masters, of the eating of things sacrificed to idols, of different spiritual gifts and of resurrection and immortality. The first were brought to his notice through the presence of immorality in the Church ; the latter constitutes an answer to a request, evidently, from the most sober and anxious people among them seeking his advice concerning those difficulties distressing them.

So far as the Corinthians are concerned, probably I have said enough to reveal the prevailing features of their character, and to disclose the cause of their differences with Paul. Paul strikes them off in

these words : " Knowledge puffeth up (fills with wind), but love edifieth (builds solidly). If a man thinketh he knoweth anything (meaning completely) he knoweth not yet as he ought to know ; but if a man loveth God the same is known of Him." Love, again, is made the organ of the supremest knowledge in life. Stopford Brooke tells us that Frederick Robertson once said : " I pray for that possession of God which comes from loving men " ; but the opposite is just as desirable and, perhaps, has priority in our religious experience ; we might well pray for that true knowledge of men which comes from loving God. At any rate there is a kind of love possible to the soul of man which is the peculiar cause of insight and of fellowship.

The Corinthian for the most part was an extreme individualist, self-contained, offended to think that there might be any authority beyond himself, any knowledge worth knowing which he did not know. Accordingly he was lacking in all consideration, sympathy and love ; notwithstanding this, he was proud and enthusiastic in his attainment in the Christian life. Strangely enough the Christian life is of sufficient reality to him to make him feel that he knows well its content and appreciates its character above all other things. We have no intimation of any in that Church in the midst of its trials and troubles, as we surely would in similar circumstances to-day, desiring to give it up and quit the Church in disgust. They cling to it as men do to a real possession. Stranger still, Paul seems to recognize the reality of this attainment.

"It is not in irony," as someone says, "but in grateful sincerity that he speaks of them," in the first few words of his letter, "as enriched in all utterance and in all gifts."

Men who are most severely discriminating in the requirements of the Christian faith are often, also, for some good reason, the most hopeful of mankind—the most deep-sighted and conciliatory. Those fine relations, however, which should exist between the individual and the body of Christians have practically no place with the Corinthians. It matters little to them what other Churches are doing, and Paul has difficulty in getting a right interest on behalf of the poor people in Jerusalem. The Corinthian gives his support to those guilty of immorality, not necessarily because he himself is guilty of any such misdemeanors, but he is contending for a principle which he identifiies with the essence of Christianity. He thrusts his Christian brother into a court of pagans to settle a dispute. He goes to pagan feasts and partakes of the food offered to idols with the freedom of one superior to all such things, despite the so-called dangers of contamination, and cares nothing about his influence upon weaker brethren, or what they may think of it. He is proud of his own spiritual gift, parades it, and despises those of others. He brings to the Lord's Supper a goodly supply of meat and drink and partakes of it by himself, indeed, gets drunk if he feels so disposed. In places of worship you have the feeling that he waits on nobody, but gives expression to his inner moods how he likes and when he likes. Even the women members, too, feel

quite on an equality with the men, go unveiled to church with no other apparent purpose than to assert their freedom.

These people do all these things because of the superior wisdom, knowledge and mysteries with which God has endowed them ; and you have the impression that they are quite sincere. Perhaps no temper of mind is so difficult to deal with, and it must occur to us as one strikingly characteristic of our own age. That disposition which considers mere unconventionality a peculiar virtue, which is so little shocked by the worst violations of ordinary decency and morality that it is in no way humbled, with so little regard for communal responsibility on the one hand, and so little sensibility to public opinion on the other, which resents any kind of interference and cannot brook authority, provides an atmosphere which in many quarters is not altogether strange to us to-day. The greatest difficulty lies in the fact that it considers itself sincere ; it has dispensed with the past because it has discovered for itself a superior rule of life.

Confronted with this you see Paul baffled, a spirit wrestling with something he cannot fight—a perverse affection of the soul. We may in consideration of such experiences better realize what he means in that other epistle (Ephesians vi, 12, 13), when he says our warfare is such " that we wrestle not against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers," etc. And yet it is in such warfare that men discover the need of the whole armour of God, and are in fact literally driven back upon Him ; and Paul here in 1 Corinthians,

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because of his perplexity, gives expression to some of the most discerning discriminations, and gives utterance to some of the purest and most distinctive expressions of the spiritual life.

When logic and understanding fail inspiration is precipitated. Nowhere is Paul's kinship with the mind of Jesus more apparent and more real. He pleads for that peculiar knowledge which is born only of love, for that distinctive Christian liberty whose true freedom is its bondage, for the winsome mystery of sympathy, the wisdom of delicate consideration, and that strange joy which comes from suffering in these and for these. Such constitute the very essence of practical Christianity, indeed the content of pure spirituality ; and it is difficult to think of any other source save Christ and the Spirit of God from which such rare qualities of heart and mind might spring.

We are well aware that in most of these discussions there is much that offends our modern intellect. Paul uses the established vehicles of thought and often contemporary modes of expression. He consigns the offender in the Church to Satan for the destruction of his flesh that his spirit, curiously enough, might be saved (1 Cor. v, 5) He shows not only a prejudice in favour of celibacy over married life (and this is to be accounted for, only in part, by a conviction of the nearness of the end of the world), but he also seems to have the common idea of that time that marriage is a thing which pollutes, is at least less than the highest (1 Cor. vii, 2).

His interpretations of Scripture are occasionally

somewhat strained (1 Cor. ix, 9—1 Cor. x, 3). In fact, neither in interpretation nor in quotation does he give evidence of any very particular care for accuracy. "For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn. Is it for the oxen that God careth or saith He it altogether for our sake?" Now it is manifest that Paul's interpretation is wrong. The law was a purely humane law; and yet his use of it is very apt, to point out that as the ox must work at such hard toil unhampered, so should the servant of Christ be free, unfettered by the petty restrictions of life in so great a work, particularly when it is a matter of mere carnal benefits over against spiritual. Moreover, it reveals the inestimable value Paul puts on the spiritual life over all things material. In his reference to "baptism unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea," to "spiritual meat and spiritual drink," I do not see that there is any good reason to infer that he is particularly influenced either by the allegorical methods of certain Rabbinic circles, or especially by that mystical conception which came to prevail in the later Church, so that the meat and water, as the bread and wine, actually stood for invisible, spiritual things.

In fact, it is not clear at all that he is endeavouring to make any strict comparison. Whether the spiritual rock that followed them refers specifically to Christ, or to the Jewish tradition of the Rock of Kadesh, or to that earlier tradition of the Well of Beer, are matters which are purely critical. It is clear that Paul has a truly spiritual conception of the Lord's Supper, much purer than we have

ordinarily among the majority of church members to-day (1 Cor. x, 17, 18, 19). Bread and wine—even the flesh and blood of Christ, if we are to see the significance of the suggested comparison, "Behold Israel after the flesh, have not they which eat the sacrifices communion with the altar?"—are nothing, except for the spiritual atmosphere they create. So on the other hand with idol worship and feasts; these, Paul admits, are empty of reality; but there are idolatrous atmospheres, there are fears and hopes, falsely conceived in such, which are unwholesome to the soul and subversive of that other truly spiritual communion at the table of the Lord.

It is all-important to realize that in these things Paul is altogether interested in their (the Corinthians') appreciation of certain great principles which are the very embodiment of Christian truth. He discerns beyond most men the subtle effects of atmosphere, the real, invisible enemies of the soul of man, in pride and self-conceit, in abuse of liberty and high favours. His plea is for humble dependence on God, "wherefore let him who thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." Man's only safety lies in his very best, and that best is a humble, apprehensive, but trustful life under God, giving itself to the very highest it knows lest even when men are preachers to others they may themselves become castaways. His ancient intellectual conceptions or misconceptions, strange to modern ears, are mingled with exhortations to forbearance, to leaving their differences to the judgment of the wisest among them, even to allowing themselves

to be defrauded rather than exploit themselves in the presence of unrighteous, unbelieving men, with earnest appeals to deny themselves rights, which he himself deems it a great privilege to do, that men might know Christ.

Even in that extreme case of the relation of slaves to their masters in which Paul has been accused of condoning slavery, that supreme principle is already actively working which makes all slavery impossible ; and yet there is a greater truth than this : the wonder of the freedom we have in Christ far more than compensates for any other bondage that men may experience and know. In spiritual conception and ethical appreciation, this man is far more than abreast in most respects with the finest Christian thought of this or any other age.

Should it be so necessary to remind ourselves that such misconceptions as Paul had were probably inevitable ; more, that all these things are absolutely immaterial to any true estimate of the Apostle or his Christianity ? It is far past time that we, once and for all, agreed that the quality of man's soul alone determines his relation to Christ, is the evidence of any salvation which has meaning for us. We shall also feel, I believe, if we ponder this inner throbbing life well, which Paul, unassumingly, unconsciously indeed, reveals in his anxious interest for the people of Corinth, that this is not of man's creation nor of natural growth in favourable conditions : it is a touch from the Eternal.

Mr. Ramsay Macdonald, lately Prime Minister of Great Britain, in an address to an assembly of Free Churchmen, gave utterance to highly signi-

ficant words when he said : " The essence of Christianity is this, that it is the ' value of human quality ' which alone could save the people. Those of the earth could never receive the quality from the earth, it could only be received from the Infinite." How significant for our times are these words, only those who have followed sympathetically the development of the whole life of this statesman will be able to appreciate. Perhaps it is somewhat of a confession, as well as a true appraisement of man and God.

CHAPTER VIII

Human Responsibility and Divine Love

There are two matters, however, in this controversy which deserve more than passing attention—this question of the eating of meats offered to idols and that of pride in spiritual gifts—because these help to call out two distinctive aspects of Paul's Christian religion, and in the circumstances, in a way unparalleled for truth and beauty, hardly to be found elsewhere. "Human responsibility," and the source of it, "divine love," are the two things which specify the essence and circumscribe the completeness of the divine revelation in Christ.

The circumstances surrounding the Corinthians' difficulty in the first case seem to be something like this. Animals were offered as sacrifices before pagan idols, and the meat was sold at the shambles to be used. Probably anyone could buy it, but generally it was used at feasts, and it seems that Christians were invited to such feasts, and in other ways were constrained by circumstances to partake of it. I suppose sometimes they were not even aware that it was such meat that was set before them. There were "strong" Christians who felt no scruples of conscience at all in the matter; their offence lay in the fact that they were proud and boastful of their deeper understanding of the

Christian requirements. There were, evidently, weaker brethren some of whom no doubt felt it was quite wrong to touch such meat, they were fearful of contamination and avoided it altogether ; there were others whose consciences were not clear in the matter, who nevertheless were influenced by the stronger brethren to eat, and consequently, according to Paul, did violence to their conscience. This action was of real injury to them, and Paul makes here one of the finest of distinctions ; he shows a subtle understanding of those inner dispositions of soul which make for character and life or the opposite. A man has stepped out from the path of life in things great or small, when he violates his present conscience, whether it be weak or strong.

There can be no doubt how Paul himself stood in this matter ; his understanding was altogether with the strong Christians. Yet he believed them more blameworthy and their position more precarious, and for this reason—their attitude of disregard showed them to be insensible of the value of life, unacquainted with the meaning of Christ's love and His sacrifice for men. Theirs was that most inexcusable of all Christian sins—the sin of irresponsibility.

Perhaps at no point does the Christian religion come to such perfection, show itself in the finesse of its distinction, as in that delicate, discerning consideration which true Christian responsibility involves. Who has not known women and men without the advantages of education and social culture who seemed to be able to discern the troubles that lay on other men's souls, even when the latter

did their best to conceal them, who with every respect for the dignity of other people's personalities, with modest diffidence and consummate delicacy could drive the evil spirit from their breasts? These, God's gentle-women and gentlemen would not hurt a living soul for all the world, yet they could be firm as adamant and kind as God Himself is kind in things that mattered, and where truth was at stake. "Considerateness" is the finest flower that grows on the tree of life. For with its anxious, loving concern, there goes a true apprehension of those things which really hurt, which injure the souls of men and the cause of Christ.

This quality of life is characteristic of Jesus as of no other who has ever lived. He calls a little child and sets him in their midst, and it is in contrast of this believing, hopeful, joyous life with that of His own disciples, or in swift contemplation of what such little ones may become when the hand of this coarse, ambitious world has laid its grip upon them, that He sighs out those unforgettable words: "Woe unto this world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe unto that man by whom the offence cometh!" It is the thought of the neglect, the false atmospheres, still falser ambitions, the lack of true love and light and the absence of a sense of the wonder and fineness of life which makes Him bid men deprive themselves forthwith of invaluable things that life itself might not suffer. "For it is not (ever) the will of your Father in Heaven that one of these little ones should perish,"—the very word "perish" (*ἀπόλλυμι*, to loose away) is significant of the way

Jesus perceived life to go out and how utterly it could be destroyed.

Jesus has the finest perception of the power and influence of feelings. He is anxious about people who worry, who are over anxious, who are engrossed, who are belaboured with burdens real or unreal ; He sees a soul-destroying influence in these far more than in those things which seem so terrible to men. He also discerns and divines the sinister influences of atmosphere. He sleeps unmoved in the wildest storm when His disciples are in a panic ; but He urges them " to pray that they might not enter into temptation " in that death-dealing atmosphere in the Garden of Gethsemane when those same disciples could hardly keep awake. Nothing, it would seem, so distinguishes man from Christ as those things which they respectively fear. Most of us are afraid of the wrong things.

On the other hand, Jesus, as no other, respects the individuality even of an extortioner, of an adulterous woman. He evaluates in terms we cannot quite understand, the attitude of the Mary who sits at his feet to hear His words, and the devotion of that other woman who pours out her soul in the breaking of the alabaster box. Yet no fear of men, no longing for their love and loyalty makes Him ever less than true and just in His dealings with them, such is His true consideration for the lives and souls of humankind.

In chapters viii, ix, 14-27, x, 11-33 and xi, 1-22, of 1 Corinthians we see Paul under the constraint of the same spirit and in possession of the same consideration, endeavouring to make these known

and to commend them to others. He lifts the whole controversy to a higher plane. He is not troubled about their fine distinctions of belief; but above everything else is he fearful lest a single conscience be offended, hurt, made less towards God. Paul discovers to us that there is one great sense in which another man's conscience is a guide to our own. "If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend." (A. V.). "Shall it be," he asks, "that through our (Christian) knowledge (so-called), the weak brother perish for whom Christ died?"

Paul, like Jesus, sees the value of life, and, in a world like this, its chances of infinite gain or loss. There is bared before his eyes, here as in other places, that sensitized living thing called the soul of man, so impressionable, so easily offended, embittered, grieved and thereby alienated from God. He is equally discerning in his detection of the outward things which menace the souls of men, and he finds himself responsible to the extent of any sacrifice for their welfare. It is nothing of the spirit of diplomatic accommodation which makes him say, "I am become all things to all men that I may by all means save some" (1 Cor. ix, 22), or, "for if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of; for necessity is laid upon me, for woe is me if I preach not the gospel" (1 Cor. ix, 16). His attitude to men was decided at no time by the mind or whims of people: indeed, Paul spent his life withstanding things and men to the face. No one was more quick to detect variations from the

truth, and inadequate views of it, and none was more willing to combat such. Nevertheless he finds himself under the constraint of something stronger than himself, making him the servant of men, grinding his life, as it were, into their moulds, if we may mean by that into a deep understanding of that sensitive, throbbing, inner life which made them what they were, and which was, he perceived, the most vital thing about every man and woman. It was in this fashion he met men, in this way he had to preach, in this manner he wrestled and pleaded with them in their wrong-doing, and it was his very life to do so. "Woe is me if I preach not the gospel," is a cry not from any outward compulsion, but from inward constraint. His own soul was nurtured upon this high moral and spiritual exercise.

It is this Paul as seen here, and even to sublimer effect in the third and fourth letters (the so-called 2 Corinthians letter) incarnating a life which is not his after all—a gift, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me"—which gradually got into the hearts of the Corinthians, and from which they could never quite get away. This is in reality the "spirit" of Christ, as it may ethically be revealed and discerned, and in this is the origin and power of the Christian Church. In this thing, which is by the Grace of God, if we could lay hold of it and analyse it, is the explanation of Christianity's uniqueness, of Paul's own certainty of the truth he preached as well as the *raison d'être* of an authority which he claimed, and which they, though unwillingly, had to accord him.

Human Responsibility and Divine Love

Not many things in Paul are more informing, lead us so deep into the sincerity of his own religious life, as his conception of and emphasis on liberty, and yet how different this liberty from that of the Corinthians. His was defined for him by the very nature of the greater life which possessed him, while the Corinthian's was, as someone has said, "at best the product of an intellectual synthesis plus a very human desire to do as he pleased." In view of the fact that there seems to be an insistency in our nature to divide along similar lines in modern times, surely Paul has some message for us.

I do not know that we can say that Christians are divided as to "weak" and "strong" brethren; but in both pulpit and pew there are those who are persuaded, on the one hand, that practical religion consists in either being implicitly told what to do and doing it, or on the other, in being definitely told what to believe and believing it. Being led by the Spirit is too unsubstantial a thing for our so-called practical age to consider a reality. Then again, Liberty, in matters of morals and thought, is the "watchword" for so many who are apparently little acquainted with the spirit of this Apostle. We have our Conservatives and our Liberals, our fundamentalists and our modernists, our premillennarianists and evolutionists, our prohibitionists and moderationists, and not least of all our anti-Unionists and Unionists. This is the Church of Christ in the first quarter of the twentieth century. Doubtless in course of time it will devolve again upon practical mystics like the Apostle Paul,

to lead us out of this morass to a surer and more confident ground of conviction.

"CONTROVERSY OVER SPIRITUAL GIFTS"

Two considerations dominate the thought of this entire epistle, the "fact" of the Spirit, and the "experience" of its supreme manifestation in the heart of man, "Love." The mere fact of the Spirit should require no apology or explanation. It is not an original conception with Paul, for it would seem to have been a common, though unique, experience with all Christians in that early Church. It began to work on the human soul at baptism and manifested itself in varied workings, gifts and powers. Without it, Paul makes the striking statement in 1 Cor. xii, 32, that "no man can say Jesus is Lord, but in the Holy Spirit." Probably we to-day cannot claim any such clarity of judgment either as to the time of its conception or in the certainty of its presence, yet there is that inner correspondence in our matured religion which makes us know that Paul is testifying to a great fact; and furthermore, it stands and abides as a vindication of that which has been urged throughout these chapters. We speak of Jesus, we are challenged by His life and teachings, we admire Him; but to say that Jesus is Lord, in that inward unchallenged conviction of its very truth, is again some way or another a work of God alone; for such a conviction does not find any satisfactory explanation elsewhere.

This love which is the supreme manifestation

of the Holy Spirit, and in the absence of which other manifestations are more or less spurious, is a new experience—a new love. It is a kind of "love-righteousness" which comes not from a loyalty to the law in which Paul had so long and so earnestly sought righteousness and salvation, but is that far higher righteousness, more human and divine, which comes by faith in Jesus Christ.

The twelfth chapter leads us into a discussion of the value of the gifts of which the Corinthians were so proud and in which they found reason for superiority and display over their brethren. Paul recognizes all these gifts as legitimate forms of the Spirit's working, but his words ought to have a salutary effect on all those among us who insist on the sidetracking of Christianity and its great essential truths into these accidentals of the faith, which are characteristic either of immaturity or of peculiar temperaments. It is evident that he names these gifts in their order of merit, although one cannot quite understand why he has not given the last—the very difficult task of interpreting tongues—a higher rating.

In the process of this discussion he is forced to formulate a conception of the Church by an illustration from our own body which is so apt and possesses such truth that it has continued to form a real, integral part of our conception of the meaning and function of the Church. Here, as elsewhere, he easily passes from the conception of the Spirit to that of the living Christ Himself. The Church is the body of Christ, the living personality of Jesus finds expression in that organ which we call the

Church, and without it, it would seem, He could not express Himself adequately. More, it is that communion of believers which constitutes the great means of giving His Spirit visibility and reality to the world. Like the human body, there are comely and uncomely parts; and the latter, just because of their lesser nature, should receive the more honour, and no one part can do without the others. Paul hereby draws their attention most forcibly to the necessity of communion rather than individualism as the mark of Christianity, and of love as the supreme requirement of all true religion.

Strange, how Christianity from its very inception and throughout its whole career on earth, in the minds of certain people, has failed to see clearly and to stick steadfastly to its simple, sublime self, so much greater, profounder and more blessed than any of those eccentricities it has so often assumed. Love is the supreme mystery of faith. Dr. Glover pays this high tribute to the members of the early Church : " The Christian had an insatiable passion for doing good—not as yet a technical term—and he ' did good ' in the simplest kind of ways," and he quotes these pertinent words of Ignatius which reveal the insight with which they apprehended the meaning of spiritual life : " *Even those things you do after the flesh are spiritual, for you do all things in the Spirit of Christ.*"

Paul allows that it was right to desire earnestly the greater gifts, but there was another way more excellent. We are inclined to think and we believe that Paul would confirm the judgment, that there is, after all, really only one way into wholesome

life-giving Christian life ; and, as he has already taught us the meaning of faith, so does he now show in the sublimest passage of all his writings, the power and the glory of true Christian life (1 Cor. xiii). This treatise on love is the inspired expression of his inwrought experience in Christ. It is a revelation of a new and higher way, and its statement of the meaning of life sets all their controversy about gifts at naught. The gripping thing about it is the audacity of its claim. Life is love, he is saying, nothing more and nothing less. Religion is love, and love for him is the heart of all creation and alone gives meaning to all being. He seems to take most of the recognizedly great things of life, at least so far as they were related at all to religion, the "art" of eloquence and rhetoric so much esteemed and coveted in those days (I do not think Paul's reference to speaking should be confined to mere speaking with tongues), " the insight and inspiration " of the seer, the " culture " or " knowledge " that assembles itself around religious insight and revelation, the " faith " that triumphs over the most serious obstacles, the studied and steadfast " philanthropy " which never grows weary and, most difficult it would seem of all, that " bodily sacrifice or martyrdom " (in which nevertheless the spirit remains untouched by the chastening influence of humble love), and he declares that without love these all are nothing.

And the astonishing, but the verifiable thing in every growing Christian experience, is that he implies that our highest faculties may be in deadly, earnest activity in the most approved things of

religion, and not have love at all, as he conceived it. More, the finest phases of religious aspiration, faith and hope, have no reason for existence except for it. His description of the nature of love and its operation defies all criticism and any helpful analysis. In a sense Love is the most helpless thing in the world, " it suffereth long and is kind, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." It is, as it were, at the mercy of all life ; it cannot use any of the world's forces, envy, pride, or joy at an enemy's discomfiture, to protect itself ; it cannot retaliate or in any way be provoked, else it defeats its own being. At the same time, it is the most tenacious, potent, permanent thing known. It cannot ever give up its quest, else the light of its own life goes out. It is humble, it never stands on its dignity, and yet it is full of all dignity, wisdom and sensible behaviour.

The impression we get is that Paul is thinking of no ordinary thing called love, it is a divine affection of the soul of man. Probably as we have it in our earthly life we must always only see it as in a mirror darkly, or know it and descry it in part ; but eventually and certainly, its presence means for us, seeing face to face, knowing as we are known, looking into the heart of Reality, beholding the face of God. To such heights and depths of discernment is the spirit of Jesus Christ portrayed in the spirit of Paul.

It is clear that the Apostle was in no doubt as to the all important and valuable gifts of the Spirit of God ; and the Church of Christ has made no

mistake, but reveals her divine leadership in those aspects of spiritual life which she has emphasized throughout the course of her history. Revelation and that which results from the exercise of the rational faculty upon it, i.e., knowledge, together with the modes of imparting these to others, prophesying and teaching, constituted for Paul the supreme content of Christianity as these also have done for the historic Church. There is no reason to believe it will ever be otherwise. Matters of speaking with tongues and similar manifestations of unintelligent emotionalism are likely to have less and less place in matured religion ; even what he calls healings and miracles will doubtless, before honest scientific investigations, yield to explanations psychological and pathological rather than to those particularly religious. Many over-spiritual people of this excitable age, especially since they so believe in the Scriptures, should ponder well these salutary though caustic words : " For I thank God, I speak with tongues more than you all : howbeit, in the Church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that I might instruct others, than ten thousands words in a tongue. Brethren, be not children in mind : howbeit in malice be ye babes, but in mind be men."—(1 Cor. xiv, 18, 19, 20.)

" RESURRECTION AND IMMORTALITY "

One last matter in this epistle deserves our attention, not only because of its intrinsic value and importance, but because Paul's assurance of

a future life seems to be determined by the same considerations which have provided an organizing basis and motive for the message of the entire epistle and also the ground of his whole Christian conviction.

There are aspects of his treatment of the subject quite alien to the modern mind, but I do not think these deserve the attention they commonly get. They are the natural idiosyncrasies consequent on that great and difficult task imposed on those who have struggled to give powerfully new moral or spiritual conceptions proper intellectual clothing.

The Corinthians' difficulty is apparently not that which perplexes us. Christ's bodily resurrection does not seem, except for a few perhaps, to have been a matter of doubt with them. They seem rather to be fearful of their own resurrection because of a recognition of the uniqueness of Christ, and a feeling that what happened in His case is not a certain guide for their own. The Jewish difficulty, of course, was to conceive of any kind of immortality or after-life in which the spirit should be apart from the body, and Paul laboured under the same difficulty. Some organ of expression was necessary for the soul's spirit-life. Whether it is Paul's experience on the road to Damascus, or the logic of his Christian experience as a whole which determines his views, at any rate he gives us his well-known conception of a "spiritual" body. One is never sure as to the nature of this body; but that great passage in 2 Cor. iv, 18, v, 1-2, and its forecasts in other places, "His own glorious body, etc.,"

would incline us to think it was some kind of glorified body which nevertheless supplied a true and congenial home for the soul, issuing as it did from the reconciling experience of Jesus in our life, and our dying to outward things that we might live by and be clothed upon by spiritual things, these being essentially achievements in character and goodness.

The same power which worked in Jesus' life to the revelation of His glory (character and goodness) worked to the resurrection of His body from the dead. Paul makes out a fairly good case in 1 Cor. xv for the possibility of change in bodily character, from the ordinary facts of life and nature, but the underlying process by which it comes to pass—through death to life—is more important for our especial consideration.

Paul, apparently, had an intense conviction of his own immortality. Preaching and life itself were empty without that hope. Whether it is "personal" immortality or not I think is not quite clear, although his words mostly incline us that way. His expectation that in some way even Christ at last will be subordinated to the Father, that God might be all in all, however, leaves opportunity for a fairly liberal interpretation. That he is as severely discriminating as Jesus was in the matter—and that is saying much, for Jesus was decisive in matters of the presence or absence of a certain quality of life—is also clear. Immortality, at least in any sense desirable, is the result of an achievement on the part of man's soul and integrally related to his character.

The reason for the Corinthian's doubt in the matter is probably due to the same facts which caused him to fail in the finer perceptions and appreciations in those other matters of the Christian life. Professor Harnack contends for a vital truth in speaking of Christ's after-life (History of Dogma, p. 86, footnote), and the latter part of the quotation is pertinent to a sympathetic understanding of the Corinthians' difficulty, and ours also, in this Christian conviction of immortality. "The disciples would have been convinced of that, in the sense Jesus meant them to understand it, though they had not seen Him in Glory, and we might probably add that no appearances of the Lord could permanently have convinced them of His life if they had not possessed in their heart the impression of His Person. *Faith in the eternal life of Christ and in our own eternal life is not the condition of becoming a disciple of Jesus, but it is the final confession of discipleship.*" "Faith in Jesus the living Lord, in spite of the death on the Cross, cannot be generated by proofs of reason or authority; but only to-day in the same way as Paul had confessed he believes in a future life for himself with God because he believes that Christ lives. That is the peculiarity and paradox of the Christian faith. But these are not convictions which can be common and matter of course to a deep-feeling and earnest-thinking being, standing amid nature and death. To act as if faith in eternal life and the living Christ were the simplest thing in the world or a dogma to which one has just to submit, is irreligious; and the habit of considering eternal life as certain even apart

from Christ is at any rate not Christian." Harnack's whole footnote here is worthy of a deep consideration because there is no aspect of religious thought in which the modern mind seems more confused and ill-informed.

Two things stand out clearly in this discussion of Paul, or rather, his conviction rests on these two facts of experience to which he has given consideration throughout. "The last Adam became a 'life-giving' (quickening) spirit" (1 Cor. xv, 4-6); this is surely the touch-stone of his conviction, together with the experience of that "new love" for God and man which is His peculiar achievement in the soul.

Immortality, eternal life, and our conviction of such are not matters to be accepted or rejected simply *de facto*. Neither are they likely to be the first confession of the Christian, however much from the very beginning we may hope and work on the conviction that the after-life is a sure fact, and is the chief motive for our efforts towards any true life. The grand confession, and I believe there is such, is a consequent of enriched, intensified and heightened life ; it indeed becomes a necessity both in our individual experience and for the higher requirements of rational Christian development. As to the form which such life takes in spheres whose order we do not know, it will be well to leave that as Jesus did, and Paul also, in the hands of God the Father. Paul ends this letter in that feeling which gave him motive for writing, in that goodwill and love which co-ordinated his thought throughout it—"If any man *loveth* not the Lord,

let him be anathema." "My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen."

"He spake of Love, such love as spirits feel,
In worlds whose course is equable and pure,
No fears to drive away, no strifes to heal,
The past unsighed for, and the future sure."

PART IV

KNOWLEDGE OF GOD AND RECONCILIATION

CHAPTER IX

The Culmination of their Differences

The so-called second epistle introduces us to an entirely different atmosphere. Conditions, apparently, had become so aggravated from new causes that matters have come to a climax between the apostle and these people. Paul's whole soul is straitened with something not less than anguish ; he believes the life of the Church is at stake. At one point he is so wrought up that he cannot wait at Troas, where he has great opportunity for work, for Titus' return, but must meet him half-way in Macedonia; and there, whether because of his chronic ailment or through spiritual anxiety and disappointment, he despairs of life itself. Nowhere in Scripture, perhaps, do we find such a picture of agitation of spirit, of such abandonment in defence; and then, when the tide has turned, of such candour in acknowledgment of joy and gratitude for their return to loyalty to himself and to the truth. He meets his opposition with that aroused energy of mind and spirit, with that truth-loving fearlessness and sensitive abandon which it is our privilege, perchance, in a life-time to witness and never forget, and which is the possession of only one kind of life, outraged nobility of soul and mind.

It is difficult to think of anything in 1 Corinthians

to occasion this outburst of terrific condemnation (2 Cor., chapters x to xiii, 1-10), and that almost pathetic joy revealed in the first nine chapters. It provides us, as no other part of his writings, with an insight into the true Paul, the inner life of this great man; and perhaps it was this awful and heartrending disclosure of his true self which was the necessary and divine plan to convince the Corinthians of the nature of truly moral and spiritualized character, to reveal to them, what indeed was this strange and wonderful thing, Christian life itself. In that admirable biography of Mary Slessor of Calabar, there is no more interesting or revealing passage than that in which the author describes this wonderful woman pleading for certain things as in vain, and these natives of a land unvisited, unbroken for ages by a gleam of love or light, responding in words which put the imprimatur of sublimity on the soul of man, however degraded. Such possible adaptability of deep understanding between people of so immeasurably different traditions and outlook makes us very suspicious of too mechanical views of heredity and environment, and of everything indeed that would encompass us in too precise modes of thinking. Their response, " Yes, ' Ma,' that is right for you ; but you and we are different," constitutes no mere jest, no simple quibbling excuse. These words are significant with a tribute to the power of Christian personality over any other influence, and more, with that insight that glimpses, at least, the profound challenge of the Christian life itself.

We never really see Christianity until we stand

awed in the presence of its greatness and goodness; and its depths and wonder are hardly ever made known except through some kind of incarnation. It was the life of Jesus Christ incarnate in the person of that frail, undaunted Christian woman, Mary Slessor, through long, dreary years of conflict and patience, which eventually broke the power of heathen ignorance and vice in New Calabar. This they could not evade; no more could the entangling web of selfishness stifling the Corinthian soul withstand the power of that same life incarnate in the Apostle, when in righteous indignation, fear, despair, hope and joy, he lays his whole soul on the altar for very love of them.

It has already been suggested that 2 Corinthians is a composite of two letters. The last four chapters seem to be part, a fragment of that severe letter which Paul speaks about and which he almost regretted sending (2 Cor. vii-viii). The first nine chapters supply those words of gratitude and the satisfaction he felt constrained to express after the return of Titus with the glad news of their repentance, humiliation, and desire to avenge the wrong done to himself. There are other difficulties as well : Chapters vi, 14-18, and vii, 1-2, may be a misplaced fragment from some other letter, for we have the impression sometimes that other letters were written of which we have lost trace altogether. There are critical difficulties also as to the visits of Timothy and Titus, and it is even suggested that Paul paid a flying visit to Corinth, which resulted in disaster, between the times of the writing of the so-called 1 Corinthians and the second letter

which we are now considering. All of this will always be interesting, although more or less conjectural, as a means of explaining the intensified atmosphere presented in this last composite letter. But this is outside the specific purpose of our study, and consequently does not demand further consideration. Our business is primarily to study the soul of Paul, and the manifold reflection of thought and feeling in 2 Corinthians provides ample scope for that single purpose.

Prof. Massie, whose translation in the Century Bible I have, for the most part, used and whose comments have to some extent guided my critical investigation and interpretation, has this to say about the *novelty of the situation* presented in the second Corinthian letter : "What is the first impression the early part of the letter makes upon us ? We suddenly find ourselves in an atmosphere quite new, and quite different from the atmosphere of the first letter. There has been a storm; the air is electric, but the worst is over; the mutterings we still hear from the distance where the thunder is passing away and only the reflection of the far-off lightning can now and then be seen. To change the figure, there had been war to the knife between Paul and the Church ; but now there are signs of peace, already in great part secured, yet only in part, if the Epistle is to be viewed as a unity; for at the close of it, the sounds of renewed battle echo loudly in our ears and even in the earlier chapters Paul's exclamations of joy at the reconciliation are still mingled with the passing tones of sorrow, an apprehension, even an anger, not yet completely

vanished. This combination of the sweet and the bitter is one of the perplexities of the Epistle." This would seem to suggest that the epistle might possibly be one letter, and there are some who hold this view.

It is not our purpose, however, to discuss this possibility or to unravel and determine the place of these various fragments, if such they be, so much as to interpret the words of the Apostle in the light of certain evident reasons for writing them. Certain emissaries of another religion, and of another spirit, as Paul contends, than the Christianity which he taught, from the outside or from within, had obtained great power in the Church. These unscrupulous leaders, for so they proved themselves to Paul's mind, had set themselves to the deliberate undermining and overthrowing of Paul's whole authority. *In a very true sense, it might be claimed that the content of this whole epistle is a defence of and comes to be actually, though not meant to be definitely, a definition of Christian authority.* This difficulty about authority showed itself early in the first letter, and Paul there is forced under the circumstances into a peculiar position. Christian liberty, if misunderstood and undisciplined, leads to an individualism which sets all authority at naught. Because there was as yet no stabilized communal consent among the membership of the Church, he was forced into the peculiar position of resting all authority in himself, whether present or absent. And very early there are evidences of revolt which growingly constitutes the chief menace to Paul in that Church.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the Corinthian

field offered auspicious ground for the propagation of theories and sinister influences designed to defeat and humble Paul. The character of the gospel these men preached is not clear. Some scholars seem quite satisfied that they belonged to the Judaizing section of the Christian Church, men who caused so much trouble in other Churches, notably that in Galatia. Prof. K. Lake, however, inclines strongly to the view that Paul's opponents were not Judaizers but πνευματικοί; i.e., men who stressed to the utmost spiritual liberty. Although their methods were unfair, probably unscrupulous, one sees no justifiable reason for supposing that these men were entirely insincere. When one truly appreciates the fine distinction between a Christianity such as Paul possessed and some other things which go by that name, then and now, he is not too ready to believe that these were exceptionally malicious men. What I mean is that, although Paul with his fine ethical honour and the delicate justice of his mind, thought them to be inordinate sinners, I am not sure that we would recognize them as such. We must remember that it must have been the natural thing, and easier far, to be a "Judaizer" or a "spiritual-liberty" man in those days, and for some very weighty reasons in the face of the things men had to contend with; and also it is to be recognized that it was an extremely difficult thing to conceive, and to sustain oneself and others in, that truly spiritual Christianity in which we believe Paul himself lived and worked.

We have not yet appreciated how great a thing it was, that this Apostle attempted to pioneer his

newly fledged converts through the bogs of paganism without the support and protection of the law and its accessories, and without, on the other hand, compromising in the least with pagan customs and influences. We have not fully realized that confidence which he must have had in the power and guidance of the Spirit to uphold and sustain men and women who had given themselves to Christ. Accordingly, I feel like maintaining that it is not necessary in order to satisfy all the conditions surrounding these letters, to think that those opponents of Paul were absolutely insincere; but we happen to find them in the presence of and in contrast with a man whose ethics and morals were at ground bottom, "who knew God" and "the truth of Christ in himself," while they were still resting on and preaching what might be called an "outward Christ," and perhaps their ideas of right and justice to others were quite in accord with such religious knowledge. "Measuring themselves by themselves and comparing themselves with themselves they are," says Paul, "without understanding" (2 Cor. x, 12). Such men's sense of justice, their consideration for others and their methods of propaganda accordingly are not of the highest order.

Their attack, of course, centred around Paul's apostleship, for to discredit that was tantamount to supplanting his authority. Besides, they seem to have cast reflections of a very serious nature upon his character. We are already acquainted with the contempt with which they spoke of his presence, and Paul refers to this again (2 Cor. x, 10). "For

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his letters, they say, are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak and his speech of no account." The accusation would seem to amount to the implication that Paul had a kind of blustering, threatening manner when writing, which he had not strength of character sufficient to sustain when he faced them.

They also attempted to show that his refusal to take recompense for his labours among them was due to the fact that he was doubtful of his own apostleship, or that he was desirous of inveigling them into some dubious project for his own interest, and that he had robbed other Churches in order to be more at liberty in his designs upon them. There is even some kind of insinuation, evident from the pains Paul takes to explain the matter, about misappropriation of the funds collected for the poor saints in Jerusalem.

One scholar, Godet (quoted in the Century Bible, p. 59), thinks, judging, I suppose, from the many references to the "fleshly sin," and because of the fact that some charge of a terrible nature seems necessary to explain the extreme manner in which Paul seems to be wounded, that one of the accusations is that of sensuality, to which was attributed his bodily infirmity. To my mind, such an interpretation from vague suggestions in the epistle is possible, but scarcely warranted. The wounding of Paul is best understood by understanding just what kind of man Paul was. Seriously to question his apostleship was to question his honesty, his sincerity in his whole attitude to life ; and to a man of Paul's nature and character no other charge, I

believe, could be so deadly. If there is any object in these chapters, it is just an attempt to demonstrate this very truth about Paul ; to show, moreover, that in the last analysis this sensitive, apprehensive reality of soul is at once the unique fruit and the supreme power of Christianity itself. Those who were opposed to him were made of different stuff, but that indifference may be accounted for by simply realizing that these were men who were more interested in attaching people to themselves than in getting them past themselves to God. They were more interested in a cause than in truth, and such or similar insinuations are not exceptional, but are the usual soul-products of men of that type.

Paul's defence in the later chapters is replete with stinging irony and sarcasm, and unabashed condemnation of those who opposed him. The issues at stake compelled him to reveal their lives in their utter destitution of any of those graces and virtues which are the mark of that which may be called Christian at all. To do this involves, whether he wills it or not, a disclosure of his own naked personality to such an extent as to make his sensitive soul wince. It is almost pathetic throughout this epistle to watch him approaching again and again something of an adequate justification of himself, and then evading it, lest he seem to be boasting, lest he be taking as credit to himself that which is the work of God.

But the vindication of all true authority rests in the unadulterated experience of the Christian; the rightness and wrongness of men and things can be judged nowhere but before the judgment-seat of

Christ established in our own souls. And despite certain criticism pointed at Paul in respect of the abandonment with which he talks about himself, I believe this very abandon is again a true mark of that same venture of faith, that same self-forgetfulness characteristic of him, and which in a very deep sense is necessary for any profound revelation of God, and therefore for the redemption of mankind. There is in the thought of the sentences which follow an incalculable mixture of two things, *humility and strength*, which constitute the spiritual amalgam, which define that confidence which knows that the things wherein we Christians judge are indeed the things of God.

Let us think into the significance of these words:[1] "*For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh*" (this is a true Christian distinction, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but mighty before God to the casting down of strongholds), *casting down imaginations and every high thing which is exalted against the knowledge of God, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being in readiness to avenge all disobedience* when your obedience shall be fulfilled. Ye look at the things that are before your face. If any man trusteth in himself that he is Christ's, let him consider this again with himself that even as he is Christ's so also are we. For though I should glory somewhat abundantly concerning our authority (which the Lord gave for building you up and not

[1] Lines in italics reveal the source of Paul's strength and the reason for his contrast between himself and them.

for casting you down), I shall not be put to shame " (2 Cor. x, 3-9). " For we stretch not ourselves overmuch, as though we reached not unto you ; for we came even as far as unto you in the Gospel of Christ; not glorying beyond our measure, *that is, in other men's labours . . . and not to glory in another's province in regard to things ready to our hand*" (2 Cor. x, 14, 18). " Would that ye could bear with *me* in a little foolishness; nay indeed bear with me. For I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy; for I espoused you to one husband, that I might present you as a pure virgin to Christ " (2 Cor. xi. 1-2). " For I reckon that I am not a whit behind the *very chiefest apostles*. (Massie : those pre-eminent apostles ; lit., the more than too much apostles.) But though I be rude in speech *yet am I not in knowledge*, or did I commit a sin in abasing myself that ye might be exalted, because I preached to you the Gospel of God for nothing ?" (2 Cor. xi, 7). " *As the truth of Christ is in me* no man shall stop me of this glorying in the regions of Achaia. Wherefore ? because I love you not ? God knoweth " (2 Cor. xi, 10-11). " For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, fashioning themselves into Apostles of Christ. And no marvel ; for even Satan fashioneth himself into an angel of light. It is no great thing, therefore, if his ministers also fashion themselves into ministers of righteousness whose end shall be according to their work " (2 Cor. xi, 13-15). In all of this, two things stand out with clearness. His condemnation is radical, going to the roots of Christian experience, and for that same reason his confidence in his own

position is certain. These men are not Christians, but deceive themselves in thinking they are, because they have not, or preach not, the Christ, *in the Spirit*, in which he has learned to possess and preach Him. They are self-fashioned Christians.

For an example of the subtlest blending of conflicting feelings, 2 Cor. xi. 16-21 provides a passage hardly to be surpassed anywhere. Here the sensitive spirit of a Christian life under the strain of opposite forces is portrayed in its very finest shadings. There is an evident reluctance to speak of himself, to answer fools after their folly, yet their very folly blinds them to the truth which can alone save them. Therefore he must shatter their confidence by a revelation of himself; but he wishes, above all, in no way to compromise Christ in this folly forced upon him. He will risk even that which is the Christian's true glory—humility and modesty—to wreck their self-sufficiency, and the skill with which he does this is nothing less than extraordinary.

The irony of his words cuts at the root of their whole failure; but just because he assumes a lower and more dubious way, they, he expects, will understand him the better. Observe the flashes of insight mingled with anxiety revealed in the following passages. "Seeing that many glory after the flesh I will glory also. For ye bear with the foolish gladly, being *wise* yourselves." It is their own self-sufficient wisdom which blinds them to the realities of life and makes them suffer fools and fools' talk so gladly. "For ye bear with a man if he bringeth you into bondage, if he devoureth you,

if he taketh you captive, if he exalteth himself, if he smiteth you on the face. I speak by way of disparagement as though we had been weak. Yet whereinsoever any is bold (I speak in foolishness) I am bold also. Are they Hebrews? So am I," etc. Paul is simply making a farce of all that they and their leaders stand for; and yet, in and through it all is a strain of his deep regard and anxiety for them. "Who is weak and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble and I burn not?" And that touch of feeling—"his care of all the Churches"—leads him back again to the deepest thing in his life, his grateful recognition of the goodness and power of God. In that alone can a Christian glory. "If I must needs glory I will glory of the things which concern my weakness." "For when I am weak then am I strong." But whether in weakness or in strength, in anger or in love, in humility or in gratitude, which exalts his soul to heaven, Paul rests his authority in a knowledge of God revealed to him by the Spirit, and of which these quite diverse things are the direct fruits.

CHAPTER X

Knowledge of God

"What do you mean by Knowledge of God," is probably the most difficult question that may be asked a religious man ; but the fact of its attainability is the most fundamental and universal, if least definable, of religious convictions. If Christianity has rendered this knowledge more intimate, it has not made it less mysterious; in fact, in some respects the Christian revelation has added enormously to the difficulty of its explanation. Most people acknowledge that Christian knowledge of God is peculiar and difficult to possess, and yet it is by this knowledge that men are saved, according to all great Christian teachers.

According to the author of the Gospel of St. John this knowledge would appear to consist in the possession of the life and spirit which is in Christ. To an explicit question concerning the way by Thomas, Jesus replied, "I am the way, the truth and the life." In response to Martha's platitude about the Resurrection, He says, "I am the resurrection and the life ; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead yet shall he live." And those well-known words in Jesus' prayer, "And this is eternal life that they should know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent," convey

the same impression, viz., that a knowledge of Jesus' own life constitutes that saving element and gives that peculiar quality to life which justifies Christians in believing that it is of God and is its own vindication.

The teachings of the fourteenth, and other chapters of John, are undoubtedly, in part at least, a reflection of the Church's experience of Christ, rather than His own precise words. Such a concession, however, makes them not the less true and valuable, but rather the more; for they contain the matured and ripened experience of what Christ has come to mean to them. This particular chapter makes Jesus say: I cannot explain all things to you but I can be all things to you, and the gospel throughout implies that unless He is all things to them, He can explain nothing.

At all events there is no salvation separate from knowledge, nor knowledge from character, and all strength, dignity and grace are in that knowledge of Jesus wherein we really apprehend what He knew and felt and sought and aspired. It is only by a common discipline of life that we humans get to understand each other. Our knowledge of Christ, of God, cannot be altogether different. Knowledge of Christ is not purely an intellectual apprehension, nor an emotional experience, but rather a substance of life won under the severe discipline of acceptance of His peculiar responsibilities (John xiv, 23, xv, 14, 15).

Likewise it was by a common discipline of obligations and the suffering entailed that Paul got to know Christ in very reality, and his experience in

Corinth was no doubt greatly fruitful to that end. Christ was not arbitrary when He asked men to *follow* Him. They must follow Him or never know Him ; and following Him resulted always in one sure thing, sorrow and suffering, as well as joy and peace. But these Christian sorrows are of such a nature that they might be called our more precious sorrows; such, because we are persuaded they are Christ's first, and we sense them only because Christ is, and is in some way in us.

The terms which Paul so lavishly uses to describe his experience in Christ are not mere imitation of mystic phraseology; they are, indeed, living attempts to convey the impression which he so strongly feels, that Christ's life is in him, or that he finds himself in it. We may run the danger of a vague pantheism, of an unhealthy mysticism, by dwelling too much on the fact that God in Christ does dwell in the Christian man. Even so, we can never know Christ unless we find and interpret His life in our own. In truth, explain it how we will, there seems to be no possibility of real knowledge except by some form of interpenetration or communion of personalities. Tertullian once said that "the Christian artisan knows God better than Plato did" ; and many of us will probably acquiesce, because Christian knowledge in its purity is something more and better than the finest efforts of the pure intellectualism of Greece.

But to know all this and to acknowledge it, is not to fathom the mystery of the knowledge of God ; it is but to discern a law of its attainment. The way of faith is a distinct way of life. It requires

peculiar qualities and temper of mind to initiate itself at all. How far, for example, does the earthly life of Jesus play a part in the formulation of Paul's faith in Christ? From various sections of these epistles it would be possible to piece together an outline of Paul's teachings. He is, indeed, very specific in contrasting his gospel with the spurious gospel preached by these self-appointed apostles. He preached Jesus the Crucified, who was the Christ, who had died, was buried and rose again, was now living and was soon to come to complete His Kingdom.

Although these were the facts emphasized, they would not in themselves be sufficient. This outline would need much explanation, and we have evidence that such was given, for he refers them again and again in the course of his discussions to that which he had received and handed on to them, to the words of the Lord. (To what have these words reference? was there a written word, or was there some oral tradition?) At times, too, he speaks of a lack on his own part of specific instruction from the Lord, and herein he trusts to the guidance of his own spirit—also the gift of the Lord—and he refers himself and others to the example of that same Lord.

There is also indicated, rather than expressly stated, the drift of his own previous thinking which led him to certain unalterable conclusions, and side by side with these, there is revealed an experience with Christ which was vindication to himself that his conclusions were sound and true. All of which leads one to believe, in the first place, that Paul was much more familiar with the earthly life of Jesus

than many scholars have been willing to concede. It is almost inconceivable that a man of the thorough and eager mind of this Apostle would fail to know everything which was to be known about this Jesus.

In the second place, this knowledge was confirmed by his present knowledge of the Lord; but you feel his present knowledge had additional elements, the result of the subsequent experience of himself and the Church. His chief accusation against the Judaizers is that they are limiting the possibilities of Christ to an earthly acquaintance of Jesus and knowledge of Him. We congratulate ourselves so much to-day on the doubtful assumption that we have rediscovered Jesus, historically. Even so, let it be granted; but the infinitely more important question is, have we rediscovered Jesus spiritually?

And if this be a just estimate of Paul's faith, and the knowledge coincident with it, is it any other than representative of the early Church? Prof. E. Scott in his little book, "The Beginnings of the Church," shows convincingly that Paul shared the traditions, beliefs and life of the early Church. At one point, however, he credits him with a new departure. Paul, he believes, was instrumental in turning their thoughts from the Kingdom idea to a personal devotion to Christ Himself. The earliest disciples only looked upon Him in an official or proleptic capacity. "Strangely enough it (this personal devotion) manifested itself in Paul, who did not belong to the circle of immediate disciples, and it may be that his attitude was due, in some measure, to this very fact. . . . So that

indeed, far from finding the starting-point for this mood of personal devotion to Jesus among the immediate circle of disciples, it belongs altogether to a later development."

In somewhat the same way Prof. K. Lake finds it necessary to explain what looks like a change of emphasis in those very early days of the Church's life, but he attributes the interest in Jesus' person to the liberal Hellenist-Jewish-Christian faction which very early makes itself felt in the Church. One has the feeling that neither explanation has the evidence supporting the original supposition that Christ from the very first was the real centre of their interest and faith. The question is, does either view do justice to the power of Christ's own personality upon the immediate disciples? This Jesus, we must remember, who was coming again, was that One whom they had seen, whose strangely powerful life they had known and felt. Their idea of the Kingdom of God, whatever its nature may have been to them previous to their knowledge of His earthly life, would now get its decided colouring and its essential quality from the imprint of His personality. Jesus' living person would incarnate that Kingdom and dominate, if not change, its character for them. But more important still, does it do justice to what is the chief contention of our thesis : that there were other more powerful agencies at work inclining the hearts and minds of men in the Church to a knowledge and discernment of, and a supremely new regard for that Person who had dwelt among them, had been crucified, but was alive for evermore?

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We are still left with the great question : how does " Faith " which is the recognized door to the knowledge of Christ and, for Christians, to any vital knowledge of God, initiate itself ? How did Paul's faith initiate itself ? And how are we to relate Paul's spiritual experience to the fact of the historic Jesus ? We know, of course, that Paul grounds the beginning of his Christian life in that apparently unique experience on the road to Damascus. There is no doubt as to the importance Paul puts on that event; nevertheless, whatever views we may take of its nature or importance, we will not deny that an intense mental and spiritual preparation had preceded the event itself.

I confess that the above question provides for me the most difficult problem in connection with Paul's whole life, and, as a matter of fact, about Christian experience itself. Perhaps it is impossible to find a solution for such a problem, for in it we are face to face with ultimate experience, the place where the divine and human life meet; and yet, if we cannot define what this experience is, we may be able to state our position so as to avoid that which it is not, and feel our way into some aspects of its infinite mystery.

" Faith," as an acceptance of an historic fact, we have dealt with before in a more or less critical mood; but we must at the same time remember that Christ for the early Church was primarily and fundamentally a " fact " (historic) in a factual world ; that, in reality, " He dwelt among us " was the beginning of all Christian faith.

Let us think of it in a general way at first. It is

the easiest kind of theological thinking, especially at the present time, to see nothing in a faith which is just an acceptance of an historic fact. Intellectual acquiescence in some fact, however great the fact itself, is not likely to have much transforming power in our life. *But it is true, nevertheless, that faith must always find some point of contact.* It is induced by a knowledge of something which is great enough to promise some validity to that to which the soul aspires. The mere acceptance of any fact, no matter how important or significant, has no vitalizing potency in itself; but the want in ourselves which makes us lay hold of this fact, as a hopeful explanation of our growing necessities and desires, will produce conditions of mind and soul which in themselves are the essence of true faith, conditions to which God seems to respond. The fact itself will unfold in its richer elements to the enquiring sincerity of our spirits.

Even when the object of desire is not high, as a mere wish to escape some impending judgment, or a false desire for good which is by no means the good we should seek, the results of the ages have justified as a whole the fruitfulness of actions of faith upon such ; as no doubt there may linger in such faith, ofttimes, an indifference to the ethical and spiritual, a slavery to the letter of historic facts and script which is deadening, narrowing and blighting to the human soul. Everything would seem to depend on the sincerity of the life which has laid hold of the fact, the strength of the desire, its willingness to know despite what it may have to sacrifice.

True faith has also from its very inception always shown an instinct to become a personal thing. It inclines towards a person for its object. Ideas, ideals, truth itself have played a tremendous rôle in stimulating the highest human efforts and maintaining the most sustained endurance. We stand bowed before the awesome constancy of some men, the stoics of ancient days, for example, or perhaps men like Mazzini, or Karl Marx of modern times, to convictions which they believed were very truth, a constancy which was true to itself amid isolation, slander and unbelief, and that awful ignorance which persists in living, acting and believing against its own best interests. These men were great, and their faith in men as well as in truth was indeed great. But, though not many Christians would like to measure themselves with them in tenacity of hope and loyalty to purpose, yet one is persuaded they are not great enough. The soul of no man can stand such strain without disadvantage to itself. It will lose in the process that which is the peculiar beauty, the unexampled quality of the soul—graciousness. Moreover, it will not be at ease with itself, for the soul of man needs fellowship, sympathy and encouragement, else it becomes pained, hard and uncongenial. If the world of human beings deny this to it, truth alone cannot provide it, however renewing and invigorating its resources. It must rest in a personal God, or a God who makes Himself known somehow in qualities which savour of personality as we commonly understand that term.

No serious, educated, cultured soul could escape

the blight of assuming a cynical attitude towards life in some communities in which it was constrained to live, except by the possession of something like the grace of God. It is this wealth of recompense, this light which seems to lend a mental outlook all its own, and is prolific in innumerable happy and even joyous consolations, which makes Christian faith more wholesome, softer, more joyous, and grander than that in the pursuit of truth itself.

If one were to venture a criticism of Frederick Robertson, it would be that the very nobility of his soul, the fine justice of his mind—revelations of his high knowledge of God—allowed themselves to work him into a peculiarly terrible isolation, as by nature they must, if there be lacking in some way that personal element of intercourse between the soul and God of which he was so much afraid, and at times almost despised, because he was so unfortunate as to witness it in his day in an abnormal extreme—a sentimentality without truth, which to his tender and reverent nature was disgusting. So lonely a soul as George Eliot, and so truth-loving, is constrained to say : " Ideas in themselves are never strong agencies for good except when taken in a solvent of feeling."

There are ascetics in the realms of intellect as well as in the walks of life. Severe disciplinarians of their mental diet and intercourse, they do not yield themselves to the over-vulnerable human aspects of thinking. The question is : is this the very truest and largest view of faith, or is it that the fundamental human instincts lead easier and straighter to the throne of God ? At any rate, I

believe that Frederick Robertson did not seek comfort enough in God; there was an apparent joylessness in his life which probably a more intimately human relationship with God might have supplied. Perhaps an essential reason for the Divine Incarnation is the fact that the world must see God in terms of supremely true human personality in order to know God; and in the absence of Christ's physical presence, something else, even a greater and more blessed thing, as the early Church believed, had taken its place.

Synoptic faith, for the most part, so far as individual men and women are concenerd, was the attitude of resting in the confidence of a Person, often without attaching any particular official content to that Person's life. Paul does not abandon the historic Jesus, but his confidence in that personality is marvellously enriched by new factors, and he is forced or led to conclusions as to who that Person was, what He was now, and what He did for human kind. This is probably to evade the problem raised by a statement of facts about it. I do not know that we shall ever get farther in the origins of personal faith in Jesus Christ. Paul felt, here as elsewhere, that the Spirit itself initiated this "Faith," but all the elements which we have mentioned and discussed are present in his abounding faith in His Lord, and religion for him was nothing less and nothing more than "Jesus," the Christ.

CHAPTER XI

Some Aspects of the Knowledge of God in Christ

There is, as we have stated, a knowledge peculiar to Christianity. It has been a possession common to all the ages and to all manner of people no matter how variable the circumstances and how different their traditions and manners. It is in this we should look for Christianity's true content and understand the continuity of its life. This is not necessarily "the truth" as we find it by reason and speculation, or from strictly human experiences. It is by no means divorced from these, yet these do not comprehend it. It is the truth as Christ conceived truth, and as Christians in varying degrees of clearness since have understood and prized it.

In the first chapters of 2 Corinthians we have revealed to us aspects of this knowledge, and my last venture in this study of the soul of Paul will be to educe some of these delicate apprehensions of the spirit of man as touched by the Spirit of Christ.

THE COMFORT WHEREWITH WE ARE COMFORTED

Paul begins this letter with a grateful acknowledgment to God for His comfort throughout this serious and almost prostrating experience. His feelings, no doubt, are due in part to the fact that circumstances have entirely changed, that the

Corinthians through a true repentance have become his people again. But he also speaks of the comfort of God in another sense which belongs entirely to God. Jesus said: "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." The comfort of God for Him evidently was a greater and more powerful thing than the pangs of mourning, perhaps because the pains of sorrow and afflictions, rightly received, led into a new knowledge of God; but possibly too, the comfort of God is a great reality in itself. In Paul, as revealed in 2 Cor. i, 3-11, we are confronted, on the one hand, with the idea that this comfort comes from God, the Father of all mercies, and on the other hand, with the persuasion that such comfort affects his attitude to men and is affected by their attitude to him, that it changes his outlook on life and increases his ability to comfort others; but most important of all, that it becomes his possession because his sufferings were those of Christ Himself. This comfort can also be conveyed to them, the Corinthians, only since they have become partakers of those same peculiar sufferings, so great indeed and of such nature—like unto death itself—that they and he should no longer trust in themselves but in God Who raiseth the dead. And it was this comfort, later, that he and they in forgiveness should minister to the one who had been condemned lest "he should be swallowed up by his overmuch sorrow" (2 Cor. ii, 7). Evidently one of the chief offenders was feeling the severe condemnation and indignation of those who had before been beguiled by him.

As Paul is now assured that right principles actuate the lives of these Corinthians—his severe letter was, indeed, chiefly to prove that this was so—he is equally concerned that they have mercy, that forgiveness be theirs and his, that this man should have their now enlightened love confirmed toward him. And yet he almost hesitates to speak at all of his forgiveness or theirs, for forgiveness belongs to Christ, but in the person of Christ he is able even to forgive, i.e., in Christ he knows himself to be possessed of and actuated by the power of God, which is reason again for his certitude of a peculiar authority (2 Cor. ii, 10, 11). His very life and that of all true apostles (2 Cor. ii, 14-17) led, as it were, in triumph in Christ, is as a savour (of incense possibly) and manifests the very character of God as a sweet odour, meaning for some in that triumphal procession, glory and life, and also for others, just as surely, death. This he recognizes as a marvellous truth which he nevertheless is constrained to believe, and well is it that he cries : " Who is sufficient for these things ? "

And yet we might add, if we know the Christian life at all, who can get away from the conviction that it is in some way true ? And comfort, such comfort as God ministers and supplies, is an obligation of him who is forgiven, who is indeed, therefore, impelled to forgive. This comfort also is of such a character that it is the only thing which can heal that breach and restore the offender. Such discrimination of feeling is, I think, peculiar to Christianity. Paul did not create these, and they have continued to be a guiding motive and support

of men in all generations wherever the Christian religion has made itself felt. They constitute one aspect of Christian knowledge.

THE LOVE WHEREWITH WE LOVE ONE ANOTHER

Another striking example which follows readily from that which we have just been considering, and which distinguishes the Christian mind, is that strange attachment which a Christian has for other men. Particularly is it evident for those whom in some peculiar sense we have a right to call our own, if we have sought them, thought of them, prayed for them in Christ, or in some way attached them to Him. We have seen that the basis of his defence as an apostle was supremely, after all, *themselves*, and here he reminds them again that he never needed epistles of commendation, for, " Ye are our letter *written in our hearts* known and read of all men, being manifest that ye are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the Living God ; not in tables of stone ; but in tables that are hearts of flesh."

" *Written in our hearts.*" Could we fathom that feeling we would not hesitate in believing that there is a peculiar love of God shed abroad in Christian hearts, and we should know further that there is a love of God constraining Christians, which is the sign, " the seal " of their confidence " through Christ to God-ward." As might be inferred from this delicate tribute to them, such love serves all the offices that we commonly call " tact," and yet there is nothing in such commendation similar to

that which we understand by "tact" ordinarily. There is nothing judicious or prudent about these words, it is an expression of pure good-will from an honest, love-filled and love-spent heart.

That brooding, yearning love which characterizes Paul's whole attitude to these foolish people is a unique example of a disposition of soul not to be found elsewhere than among Christian people. The desire that they (the Corinthians) might really know him, know how true and loyal to them he has been despite appearances, is an effect of the love of God in his heart. "We are ambassadors, therefore, on behalf of Christ as though God were intreating by us." And again, in that wonderful passage (2 Cor. vi, 3-10), where he portrays his own moving inner life in its long-suffering, unfeigned love for them, there are revealed feelings, desires and reflections foreign to any religion other than that of Christianity. At the same time, these revealings of his heart bear an unmistakable identity with all that we know and feel was Christ's own attitude to men. Love such as Christ had and gives must by its very nature possess its object, or it breaks, and that object cannot be ever anything less than the return of a kindred love in very pureness ; for such on the part of man is his only true salvation. As we listen to words like these, "Our mouth is open unto you, O Corinthians, our heart is enlarged. Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own affections. Now for a recompense in like kind (I speak as unto my children) be ye also enlarged," we feel we have a candour as well as a strange yearning affection

which only a paramount reality of soul could justify.

The supreme desire of Paul's life, at the time, is for their affection and love, and he is impelled by the very power of it to tell them of his own and plead for a response in kind. Surely such attachment is exceptional to those who are united in some way other than by earthly bonds. "Open your hearts to us; we wronged no man, we corrupted no man, we took advantage of no man. I say it not to condemn you; for I have said before, that ye are in our hearts to die together and to live together. Great is my boldness of speech towards you, great is my glorying on your behalf. I am filled with comfort; I overflow with joy in all my affliction." Such words would be ridiculous were they not true; and they manifest a power of soul reflecting the finest and deepest features of a Christian knowledge of God.

THE PARADOXICAL IN CHRISTIANITY

One of the surest signs of the creative work of God upon Christians is that which we might call their paradoxical experiences. These in course of time come to belong to every serious follower of Jesus Christ. They are possessions of mind, or qualities of conviction which are at variance with the circumstances producing them, or even with common sense as conceived by the natural man. Such experiences are impossible of explanation, and the sense of our conviction in them cannot be communicated to another unless he has already

experienced it. So essential are they, nevertheless, that instead of being incidental phases of Christian life, they form the most integral part of the whole revelation in Christ. To Paul, Christ in His incarnation, life and death, is a complete contradiction of the fashion of this world and the pride of it, and His work in the souls of men reveals the same surprising contradiction to natural expectations. So he speaks of himself, "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the exceeding greatness of the power may be of God, and not from ourselves; we are pressed on every side, but not straitened; perplexed yet not in despair, pursued yet not forsaken; smitten down, yet not destroyed, always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body" (2 Cor. iv, 7-11). And again, after describing the nature of his ministry to them, he says, "By the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by glory and dishonour, by evil report and good report, as deceivers and yet true, as unknown and yet well-known, as dying and behold we live; as chastened and not killed, as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich; as having nothing yet possessing all things" (2 Cor. vi, 8-10).

These apparent antitheses in experience, as we have already observed, are not mere features of the Christian life; they dip deep into the whole significance of the Christian revelation of life, and for that reason, such knowledge particularly represents the distinguishing elements of the teaching

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of that Spirit which Paul believes imparts to men the deep and unsearchable things of God. This may, probably, constitute a fundamental proof to a Christian that his experience is of a transcendent nature.

Professor W. Herrmann has in many aspects so admirably described the Christian life in his great book, " Communion with God," that we shall quote a passage which seems pertinent to the matter under consideration. " God takes away our self-confidence, and yet creates within us an invincible courage. He destroys our joy in life, and yet makes us blessed ; He slays us, yet makes us alive ; He lets us find rest yet fills us with unrest ; He takes away the burden of a ruined life and yet makes human life much more difficult than it is without Him. God gives us a new existence that is whole and complete ; yet what we find therein is always turning into a longing for true life and into a desire to become new " (" Communion with God," p. 117).

Such life, which, with increasing years and experience, impresses every Christian believer with its substantial validity and truth, is not merely a static revelation, or a logical inference to be drawn from the teachings of Jesus—as such, it would not ever be understood as it may be understood—but it is a revolutionary process in the soul of the Christian which yields a new motive and strength to life in its entire aims and purposes, and provides a content of knowledge which distinguishes the Christian from the man of the world. There is, in very truth, a citizenship of heaven ;

it is a fact that a man may live vitally in this world, and yet be not of it, and no explanation does away with the fact, however we may account for its cause or origin.

CREATIVE POWER IN CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE

It is scarcely necessary to say that it is the view of the writer that we do not ever know God as Paul knew Him, except we learn to know Him in His creative power. The aspects of Christian knowledge already considered form part of those consequences due to this peculiar work of God. One or two other features of this life may be referred to, as incidentally touched upon in the second Corinthian letter. In 2 Cor. iii, 4-18, we find Paul, in vindication of his own account of himself, his persuasions and his actions, contrasting the glory of Moses and the law and the transient character of the same with the Glory of Christ which, it is to be noted, is not a physical or outward thing, but inwardly moral and spiritual, having to do with the very reality of character itself (Christ's as well as ours)—a glory which transforms us into His image from glory unto glory. And this is a living process which he knows and experiences, as indicated by the use of the present imperfect tense (2 Cor. iv, 18).

We must be careful to notice that the power which "transforms," or which "sets us free" from the power of the law, comes not from mere reflection or contemplation. The revelation of the Spirit is the new Glory of God ; but its presence in our hearts is at once a ministration, both of life

and of death. It is the Spirit that flashes the new truths on our hearts in which Christ is made known to us, and we are set at liberty ; or, the Spirit is really Christ imparting Himself in some way to us in the only true knowledge of God ; " now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty " (2 Cor. iii, 17) ; " even as from the Lord the Spirit " (2 Cor. iii, 18).

Again, in his confidence in immortality, we have the basis of his conviction not in speculative thought, nor in teachings of Jesus, nor in reasonable anticipations from the necessities and greatness of life ; but in the work of God upon his own soul. Paul seemingly shrinks from death because of the nakedness which, in his Jewish mind, he believes death entails ; but he has courage because a fashioning of a spiritual body is in process, " Now he that wrought us for this very thing is God, Who gave unto us the earnest of the Spirit " (2 Cor. v, 5).

All of this, however, is incidental to one supreme, fundamental Christian experience to which I will give my attention in the remaining portions of this section of my study.

RECONCILIATION AND ITS CONDITION REPENTANCE

First of all, let us recognize that repentance and reconciliation have been facts of human experience, even when not particularly religious. That men in every age have been forced to form thought-concepts to express these precise phases of mental and soul life is guarantee in itself of the validity and necessity of such experiences. In the face

of the strong disposition in recent years to believe that the importance of the traditional Christian view of repentance and reconciliation has been over-emphasized, that the conception of man's sin as theologically held hitherto, is now unrealizable in view of our wider knowledge, that, at best, such experiences are exceptional, peculiar to temperaments such as that of the Apostle Paul, it is well to remind ourselves that such phases of soul-life are interests primarily psychological rather than theological, and as such, function supremely in our ordinary life (especially in family life), and are necessary if that life is to show itself in its highest and finest effects.

What true father has not felt the embarrassing and baffling estrangement which sin or wrongdoing sets up between himself and his son, especially when the sin is unrecognized, denied, or not sufficiently appreciated in its wrongness to make repentance true? To fail to appreciate the awful "wrongness" of wrong is, in reality, the chief hindrance to all moral and spiritual progress, and constitutes the most baffling problem of religious training either in the young or in the old. Nothing breaks that strange barrier set up between the wrong-doer and the wronged, but real, unreserved and frank sorrow for the wrong. If something, however small, is kept back, if the motive is merely to escape punishment or a vexation of spirit because of consequences, this sorrow is not something the same, but a different thing altogether, a thing which destroys rather than creates life, and every conscientious father knows it.

This is what Paul means when he speaks of the Corinthians in 2 Cor. vii, 8 as being sorry for a season and in a way which made him regret having sent his severe letter ; for such irritation of spirit as it evidently produced for a short time, even though they were conscious of their guilt, was working their moral and spiritual ruin. Then, on the other hand, he exults in spirit at another kind of sorrow which makes for life, heals them and, indeed, is creative of new sources of life altogether. His description of this godly sorrow is simple but perfect. " For godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation, a repentance which bringeth no regret "—" but the sorrow of the world worketh death." His revelation of their souls under the spell of this power presents us with one of the finest examples of psychological and spiritual discrimination. " What earnest care it wrought in you, yea what clearing of yourselves, yea what indignation, yea what fear, yea what longing, yea what zeal, yea what avenging. In everything you approved yourselves to be pure in the matter."

To go back again to the analogy between a father and his son ; if a wholesome candour—a true openness of soul—is not present in the event of wrongdoing, an inevitable spiritual separation takes place, which nothing but true repentance can disengage ; but if that frank confession and sorrow are forthcoming the filial relationship is healed ; indeed, new energies, creative of and deepening to life itself, are set in motion in both their souls, and almost a greater and more precious

experience is known than could have been if wrong had not occurred. At least something new and vital has come into life's experience.

What we are failing to see in modern days, in our pretentious concern for ethics and morals and in our distaste for experiences, is the fact that true repentance is the most *ethically* creative act in all life ; that the condition of soul which it involves, even though outward character has been lost, is infinitely more valuable and precious than any other state without it. This is the pertinence of the prodigal's joy and filial discovery in contrast with the older brother's mere morality. This is the experience of reconciliation ; it is more than a fact to be reflected upon, it is an experience of the power of creative love, sensitively apprehended, and is one of the most purifying and life-producing and joy-inspiring experiences of which man is capable.

At any rate there is no doubt that we best conceive Christian life in the terms which Jesus suggested and which, undoubtedly, Paul adopted, i.e., in the Fatherhood of God and the sonship of the believer. If Paul's technical terminology is sometimes at variance with this simple view of it, we may be certain that the heart of his experience functions in its essence. Besides, it may be, there were additional facts in early Church experience which made it incumbent upon him to seek other analogies to define his and their life in Christ and to make this filial relationship itself more clear to them.

If we could but know fully the true psychology, the inherent necessities and creative potencies of

" pure love "—a thing no man has ever known or possessed—we would thereby understand, as we do not now, the mystery of the Cross, the necessity, satisfaction and power of atonement ; and I believe the various theories thereof, in the light of this far greater knowledge, would find themselves more nearly akin than supposed. Paul and the greatest religious teachers of all times (Augustine and Luther for example) have all felt that Christ's death stands unique in that supreme revelation of God to man, that in that death something was achieved for man ; that the love of God in Christ was a fact in supreme living action in His death, and not merely a demonstration of a fact in order to influence and encourage us toward the higher life. The death somehow judged sin and therefore created and completed a new relation to God for man.

And we should recognize that we have not, by any means, discerned the meaning of Paul's conviction when we rest in the supposition, as we naturally might from a single verse like this (because of the past tense used in the verb), (" because we thus *judge*,[1] that One died for all ; therefore all died ; and He died for all that they who live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto Him Who for their sakes died and rose again "), that this constitutes merely a mental conclusion arrived at some time in the past through his Jewish prejudice and his traditional conceptions of atonement together with the inexplicable fact of Christ's death. This, no doubt, forms part of Paul's thinking and the conclusion he had to come to,

[1] The Greek word is in the past tense (vi. 14).

but it is not the important element. That supreme element is his conscious experience of the reconciling power of God in Christ and the nature of the reconciling process—an experience of dying to self in order to find life ; and because, moreover, that same power was revealing itself wherever the conditions of the Christian life were in any sense being fulfilled.

It is apparent that this is the principal reason why Paul believes that the position of the Judaizer and his kind is virtually a denial of the gospel of Christ. To insist upon the necessity of the law is to deny the true efficacy of the revelation of the Spirit ; more, to parade their earthly acquaintance with Jesus in connection with a knowledge of His teachings as externally given and received, even a personal knowledge of His thoughts and deeds, was for Paul a sign of the possession of fleshly knowledge, but had in itself no saving significance.

Massie writes : " This earthly manifestation in the flesh was in Paul's eyes antiquated by his manifestation in the Spirit under the conditions of the new life." We dare go still farther, and claim that even the great historic facts of Christ's life, the death and resurrection of which Paul made so much, do not reveal their full significances as mere historic facts ; but they become essentially spiritual processes which function in man's salvation. " Wherefore," he accordingly says, " we henceforth know no man after the flesh ; even though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know Him so no more. Wherefore, if any man be in Christ, it is a new creation : the old things (even

Christ's manifestation in the flesh) are passed away, behold they are become new."

All this is the result of a new, creative energy and is the specific work of God. He reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and empowered us with the ministry of reconciliation. Paul therefore gives us no higher or more experimental judgment of Christ than this : " God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." He believes from the experience of the reconciling power of Christ which he knows personally that a new relationship between man and God has been created by the death of Christ, that new sources of life and power have, thereby, been released which are at the disposal of man—death working in the believer, but also new life, the power of the resurrection. Paul feels that Christ's death achieved a new relationship for men with God, created an order which is no longer under bondage of the law ; and he surely implies that Christ's death in some way satisfied the law's demands upon us. He is careful not to say that Christ became a " sinner " on our behalf, but " sin," in some such manner as Christians become the righteousness of God in Him.

This righteousness of God, possible to the Christian, is, as we have seen, not a purely theoretical thing, supposed or posited, but a rich, living experience, a " love-righteousness " which I believe is known to most Christians everywhere to some extent. And from this parallel, I think, we should be careful also to define Paul's conception of Christ's representation, or substitution, after the nature and in the character of the analogy he offers and not

in so many other ways in which it has been done, as foreign to Paul's whole conception as they are to our own. Paul's theology is primarily experimental, and its interpretation is best discovered psychologically ; that is, if psychology is tempered with true spiritual insight.

This life which Christ has released may be imparted to men by the Spirit, i.e., it may be appropriated by those who have faith. And that faith is the placing of man's undivided psychical self at the disposal of Christ. In this way he rises above himself ; for he achieves a victory over his entire self. John says : " The believer overcomes the world by faith." In either case, man wins a place in a higher order of life ; he becomes conscious of spiritual life ; *and this is what Paul always means by that term.* " I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God : for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain " (Gal. ii, 20, 21, A.V.).

This brings us to a conclusion in our analytic consideration of Paul's inner life. One or two things need to be especially observed and emphasized. Paul, in an agony of despair for them, won the Corinthian Church back to himself and to God. Possibly there is nothing so powerful in all life as a baffled truth-pursuing and truth-loving soul. Both in defence and gratitude, Paul is at his best, and unfolds his soul in such a way as to give us at least a glimpse into the power and secret of his per-

sonality. The test of his apostleship is in some way linked up with the quality of his suffering and his sorrow on their behalf, due to his love for them and his hope in them. Or, to put it in another way, Paul is assured of the permanent and eternal quality of his inner life, because he is confident that it is Christ's very " Life " in him, and in no vague mystic sense does he apprehend the concept " life." There is probably nothing in all his thought which he knows more truly, even if he cannot define it clearly to others.

It would be true to say that Paul felt his Christian experiences to be exact reproductions of the experiences of Jesus. The whole moving life of Jesus the Christ, in its love for men, in its implicit trust, in its qualities of sorrow and joy, passion and hope, depression and exaltation, was surging through him, as if he had been flung into and was abiding in the deeps of Jesus' own experience. Thus, he speaks in another epistle (Gal. ii, 20), of " being crucified with Christ," and again in Phil. iii, 8, 9, 10 of " counting all things but loss that he might win Christ, and be found in Him, that he might know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death." There is something very closely akin between Paul's joy and Paul's sorrow, and loving as Christ loved is the source and inspiration of both. Loving is living, for Paul. So, too, the crucifixion and resurrection are not alone historic incidents to Paul ; they were living, eternal experiences given by God and constituting " the life " in the midst of all other life.

Professor Adolf Deissmann in his "St. Paul, a study in social and religious history," gives the much needed emphasis to this aspect of Paul's religious experience in the following passage. "St. Paul treats the sufferings, crucifixion, death, burial and resurrection of Christ as processes of salvation, which he, Paul, and other Christians share in ethically and mystically, not only in baptism but in continuous fellowship of suffering, of the Cross and the Life of the transfigured Master. Of all religious appreciations of the Cross in St. Paul these are probably the deepest and most original. Herein the Cross became instead of a historical conception, altogether a spiritual, mystically realized, and living reality. St. Paul's religious contemplation is not the only thing to be explained by Christ. The store of ethical convictions, brought with him from Judaism and Hellenism and gospel traditions themselves acquire real brilliance through the experience of Christ."

The importance of such insight into Paul's character and life dwells in the fact that it relieves him of the doubtful criticism of being supremely theological and theoretic. Paul was neither. He was a man in whose religious experience true mysticism and ethics met and blended, and were absolutely essential to each other. Deissmann, in opposition to common but mistaken interpretations of the Apostle's life, affirms that he was none of these; but rather a "homo religiosus." One might be pardoned in seeing him in still another light. His life presents a supreme example of the triumph of reality.

CHAPTER XII

Heart to Heart Revelations and Appeals

Our knowledge of the reality and sincerity of the character of Paul would not be complete, were we not to take account of certain very personal references to himself in which he seems to want to tell the Corinthians how it is in his own soul, how in all the relations of his life, that of his ministry, his preaching and his own private thoughts and motives, he is so entirely dependent on that other thing which has animated and sustained his life, the Spirit of the Power of God. Paul's own transparently honest confessions seem to clinch the argument, if that were needed, for the reality of those strange agencies of spiritual power and resource, which find so little consideration in natural or rational explanations of Christian experience or of the Church's origin. 2 Corinthians is richer in such personal confessions than any other part of Paul's writings. In our consideration of these intimate expressions of his own life, we shall use Moffatt's or Weymouth's translations, as these in respective instances seem to bring out the very substance of Paul's thoughts and render to us the finer shading of his feelings.

THE SPIRIT AND THE LETTER

"And for such service as this, who is competent? We are; for, unlike most teachers, we are not fraudulent hucksters of God's Message; *but with transparent motives as commissioned by God, in God's Presence and in communion with Christ,* so we speak.

"Do you say that this is self-commendation once more? . . .

"Such is the confidence which we have through Christ in the Presence of God, not that of ourselves we are competent to decide anything by our own reasonings, but our competency comes from God. It is He also who has made us competent to serve Him, in connection with a new Covenant, *which is not a written code but a spirit; for the written code inflicts death but the Spirit gives life*" (2 Cor. ii, 16, 17; iii, 1-6). (Weymouth.)

Paul has found that his life, his own personal experience, has become a kind of barometer of other men's lives, as to the presence of life or death in them. He is aware how great a claim this is to make, but he is confident that it is true, and attributes it to the fact of his absolute honesty in contrast with many others who are not truly honest with themselves or with those to whom they preach. His whole motive, as he knows it, is of crystalline purity, sun-tested (Weymouth, footnote). His ministry of God's message is executed in the solemn realization that he got his commission from none other than God Himself, and in the prosecution of that ministry he feels he is in the

very presence of God and in real fellowship with Jesus Christ.

By his own reasonings he could have come to no such confidence at all ; only through Christ in the presence of God can he know this to be true, and moreover, is he made competent to serve in the new Covenant which is a Covenant of the Spirit and not of the law or the letter.

One can hardly conceive of words which are more disposed to test severely the integrity of so much of that upon which is based the great modern controversy about well-defined interpretations of certain creeds and dogmas and the verbal inerrancy and inspiration of the Scripture, on the one hand, and the conviction, and dominant claim, sometimes, on the other hand, that a thorough-going examination and acceptance of the principles of Jesus' Life will suffice to reveal to us what Christianity is, and render to us any power it may have.

Christianity, Paul asserts unambiguously, is *the* religion of the Spirit. It is, for him, that fact about it which makes it a new Covenant ; and it is his experience of this Spirit's illumination which releases him and gives him freedom from the necessity and severe bondage of either traditional or external guidance. Nothing we can think of, at any rate, could be so palpably offensive to God and useless to men as the fact that servants of Christ might be hucksterers of God's message, i.e., traffickers in the things of God to propagate personal views, especially when it so often means for selfish reasons, whether they who do this are aware of it or not.

It is probably the fear of uncertainty which makes so many cling tenaciously to the letter of traditional religion ; and then again, it is the conviction that if we could but exactly know Who Christ was, what He said and did, we could satisfactorily follow Him and order our lives accordingly. But this fact on the one hand, and supposition on the other, only serve to accentuate the superior religion of Paul, and emphasize that aspect of faith in which all things are discovered by venturing upon God-given impulses, those strange indwelling insistencies of the soul of the earnest man which are somehow coincident with the challenge of Jesus' life, and whereby man may alone get liberty, and a new authority is given which is axiomatic in his own soul. This new but indefinable covenant is not a written code but a spirit.

THE SPIRIT : HIS MINISTRY AND THE HUMAN CONSCIENCE

" The Lord means the Spirit, and wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there is open freedom. But we all mirror the glory of the Lord with face unveiled, and so we are being transformed into the same likeness as Himself, passing from one glory to another ; for this comes of the Lord the Spirit " (2 Cor. iii, 17, 18). (Moffatt.)

" Therefore, being engaged in this service, and being mindful of the mercy which has been shown us, we are not cowards. *Nay we have renounced the secrecy which marks a feeling of shame. We practise no cunning tricks, nor do we adulterate*

God's Message. But by a full, clear statement of the truth, we strive to commend ourselves in the presence of God to every human conscience. If, however, the meaning of our good news has been veiled, the veil has been on the hearts of those who are on the way to perdition, in whom the god of this present age has blinded their unbelieving minds so as to shut out the sunshine of the Good News of the glory of Christ who is the image of God" (2 Cor. iv, 1-4). (Weymouth.)

Perhaps the most human appeal of these passages is that in which the author is apparently trying to tell the Corinthians how he in his ministry above all things else desires to be understood, to be known as he is. The reflection of what he has been thinking in himself, probably in days of perplexity, at any rate, in the discipline of his own inner character, is portrayed here, and with fascinating reality. The Spirit has clarified his own life for him; he finds himself simply mirroring the glory of Christ, being transformed from one degree of righteous character and discernment to another. There is nothing veiled in Christ, so there must be nothing veiled in himself. His overwhelming sense of God's goodness drives away feelings of cowardice and faintheartedness, and there is nothing held back (kept secret) which would reveal the presence of the feeling of shame. Such is that freedom which comes when God's Spirit is in our hearts, and the frankness and openness which it encourages, is, he finds, the best and most effective commendation to the human conscience. There are some, however, whose hearts seem to be veiled; this con-

stitutes one of the great perplexities of Paul's life. We believe that it was his experience with men and their invulnerability to the clear light of the gospel, which determined very largely his views of election, fore-ordination, etc. Otherwise it was to him an inexplicable thing that men could either mistake him, or fail to see clearly the glory of Christ which was a gospel, clear as sunlight itself. Of course we will understand, too, that he implies that it is the Spirit that has made him " see " as he does see ; and indeed, it is the fact of the Spirit and its work which has created this problem in his relation with other men. However, the freedom, the desire and the perplexity of an honest man are revealed to us in the most human, tenderest and humblest terms, and the Spirit is the source of both his greatest confidence and his greatest perplexity.

THE SPIRIT AND THE PERSON

" *But we (I) have this treasure* (this bright light, for he has been speaking about a light) *in a fragile vase of clay*, that the surpassing greatness of the power may be seen to belong to God and not to originate in us (me)" (2 Cor. iv, 7). (Weymouth.)

Paul recognized as few Christians have ever done that in the ministry of Christ, in the transforming of men's characters and building up of a communion of God, the minister in himself is nothing. A conviction like this is not the result of an exceptional modesty on the part of Paul, but a clear apprehension of the meaning of the facts of his own life's work

and achievements. There was for Paul a great mystery about godliness itself, or rather, something of an unfathomable nature about the whole revelation of Christ and His vindication by the Spirit (1 Timothy iii, 16). But there was equally a profound wonder about the ministry of His word and the furtherance of His Gospel (Phil. i, 12).

Paul learned in the prison at Rome, if nowhere else, shackled and bound, never to take himself too seriously. However, his whole experience had taught him that in the ministry of Christ, the power of God some way was the all important factor. And in heart to heart confidence, here, he is trying to tell the Corinthians that it is so, and especially in his own case. I have this treasure, he says (there is no doubt about it being his), but in a jar of clay (a life whose very weakness would make it apparent that the power was of God alone). Why, says Paul (as if he would make them see his whole inner life), my whole life has been one long, harrying, perplexing, baffling, experience ; persecution has been mine ; violence has been mine ; death is active in me that God's power and life might be active in you. He is trying to prove to them that there is not much room in his life for self-confidence ; but nevertheless, there is a confidence, strong and free ; it is that he is in possession of the light which comes by the Spirit.

Paul implies also that it is not enough that we recognize our own frailty, but somehow the frailty should be of such a character that it stands imbued with a power which unmistakably belongs to God. It reminds us of the words of Jesus Himself :

" You are the light of the world, a town built on a hill cannot be hid." . . . " Just so let your light shine that men shall see your holy lives (the radiance of the good you do) and *glorify your Father which is in Heaven.*" Such a task in itself can only be done as we are guided and empowered of God. But of chief interest to us in this place is the fact that Paul wants the Corinthians to know that it is particularly true in his own life's experience.

THE SPIRIT AND APPEARANCES

" *If I appeal to the interests of men*, then it is with the fear of the Lord before my mind. What I am is plain to God without disguise, plain also, I trust, to your own conscience. This is not recommending myself to you again ; it is giving you an incentive to be proud of me, *which you can use against them who are proud of externals instead of inward reality*" (2 Cor. v, 11, 12). (Moffatt.)

Weymouth renders the last clause of the passage as follows : " *For those with whom superficial appearances are everything and sincerity of heart counts for nothing.*"

That which gives occasion to such words would seem to be an accusation that Paul in the presentation of his Gospel had been appealing unduly to the interests of men. Paul's evident sensitiveness to such an accusation makes it clear that he conceives such appeals to be sinful, a thing to which no minister of Christ should lend himself except for reasons which are plain to God without disguise. It is rather because of his sensitive apprehension

of what the Lord is, or should be to men, that He is impelled to use all means to win them. But he does it in that frame of mind so characteristic of him, as if in the presence of the Lord Himself—perfectly open-minded and with open conscience to God.

That which perplexes Paul again, however, is the fact that there are some who do not understand him. There are people who have no power to discern inward reality, or to appreciate its supreme value. Paul evidently has that feeling, so discouraging at times, that the very best we have, instead of drawing us near to people, cuts us off from them. They judge men and estimate life by superficial appearances; they themselves are proud of externals—they live for them and by them. There should be in them and him something congenial which would make it clear to them that his life is full of reality, but too often he does not find it so, and because, we may infer, some people have not been touched by the Spirit of God which makes life and all things real and true, and without which the great values of life are not truly appreciated at all.

This making all things real, we believe, is one of the supreme works of that something which Paul calls the Holy Spirit. Appearances, imitation, something just less than the full acceptance of and loyalty to Christ, are of no avail in the work of God, and no one is so deceived as he who trusteth in these. Even with the most superficial people, reality asserts and confirms its worth in the long course of life; for our souls, though they may

lack many good things, are so fashioned that they cannot rest in anything but reality itself at the last.

THE SPIRIT AND EXPERIENCES

"There is nothing to be gained by this sort of thing, but as I am obliged to boast, I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. *I knew a man in Christ, who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. In the body or out of the body? I do not know; God knows.* . . . (If I did care to boast of other things, I would be no fool, for I would have a true tale to tell; however, I abstain from that—*I want no one to take me for more than he can see in me, or make out from me.*) My wealth of visions might have puffed me up, so I was given a thorn in my flesh, an angel of Satan to rack me, and keep me from being puffed up. Three times over I prayed the Lord to make it leave me, but he told me, *it is enough for you to have My grace; it is in weakness that My power is fully felt.* So that I am proud to boast of all my weaknesses, and thus to have the power of Christ resting on my life. It makes me satisfied for Christ's sake with weakness, insults, trouble, persecution and calamity, *for I am strong just when I am weak*" (2 Cor. xii, 1-10). (Moffatt.)

This peculiar passage, almost despised in some quarters as an example of unreal Christian experience, or as a very abnormal product of Paul's eccentric temperament, has, nevertheless, no superior in all Paul's writings as a purely naked confession of his life as he sees it himself in retrospect, and it embodies

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Christian experience of the maturest and most characteristic kind. It is to be remembered that we owe our knowledge of this peculiar experience of Paul to the fact that he is forced to tell it in defence, in view of the Corinthians' superior claim to such strange revelations from God. It is a difficult thing to characterize Paul's experience, referred to in the first part of the passage ; but in Christian experience there *are* unspeakable things, things which the mind cannot define and language does not express.

However, the important thing is not the character of the experience, but the apparent truthfulness of Paul. He speaks the language of a child of God, telling of his experience with his Father. God had apprehended him in an unforgettable, unspeakable way, but lest he be tempted, lest he centre God's goodness in Self, God dealt with him, too, in a way terribly different. Whatever he refers to, we may infer that it was an experience painful and perplexing to a degree, so much so that he with a child's urgency asks three times over to be relieved of it. This must mean that at three distinct periods in his life he importuned God unceasingly on his own behalf that this affliction might be taken away. There are times when the impetuosity of the soul must just thrust itself upon God, must intrude upon reason and violate the sacred nature of trust itself. This may be petulant, wilful and unbelieving, but at any rate it is human and real, and it is the presence of this latter quality above any other which makes prayer effective. It was surely through a process of time and discipline,

however, that he came to hear God speak in a truth of life deeper and more certain, in a satisfaction more wonderful than that for which he had prayed. If we ponder those words again, " For I am strong just when I am weak," we are at the core of Christian experience, and have realized *the* possibility of a Christian ministry.

There is prevalent to-day a decided distaste for and suspicion of what we have come to call Christian " experiences." A blunt but honest man once said to the writer, " I am no longer interested in men's experiences with God ; I am interested in my experiences with men." And why, we ask, have shrewd men come to conclusions such as these words express ? Because far too many Christians have boasted of experiences with God which have shown no true ethical results in their lives, and because they have managed to divorce Christian life from the realities of which life itself is made.

This is exactly what Paul does not do. The supreme and only valid result of Christian experience is a new insight into the meaning of life, issuing in a higher morality than this world knows, which makes Christian men accept life more bravely, more trustfully and more humanly than do other men.

THE INDWELLING CHRIST

Near the end of the severe part of this letter, Paul makes an earnest but startling appeal to the members of the Christian Church of Corinth. " Test yourselves," he says, " to discover whether

you are true believers ; put your own selves under examination. Or do you not know that Jesus Christ is within you, unless you are insincere ? " (2 Cor. xiii, 5) (Weymouth.) One effect of a serious study of Paul, is to feel again in his unsurpassed analysis of the Christian life, the power and truth of the discriminations he makes. He also throws the mind into a mood of contrast and of humbling self-examination, as the Spirit, for which he contends so confidently, still speaks in his words to our own consciences. No wealth of argument is likely to be so good a witness to the reality and presence of that Spirit. Furthermore, without something of that sincerity which Paul feels distinguishes the Christian life, we may get through life all right—indeed, make a very favourable impression in it, the world being what it is; but there is something also which tells us that the lack of such sincerity as the Christian religion demands, will be our nemesis in the shaking of that world.

THE NEW COVENANT MINISTRY

Indeed the heart of Paul's understanding of his own ministry in Christ seems to lie in a passage which is central to the whole epistle (2 Cor. iii, 1–vi, 10).[1] In this passage Paul claims distinctly to be a minister of a new Covenant; this fact gives him his authority and his credentials. And although such a ministry makes exacting claims upon him, he is encouraged by the fact that its

[1] I am indebted to Prof. Manson of Knox College, Toronto, for this suggestion and for the analysis of the section in the paragraph following.

prosperity and power do not depend upon him, but upon something in him far greater than himself which nevertheless gives him the right to be heard. The passage may be analysed in this threefold way. (1) The claim of Paul to be heard rests on nothing personal, but on the ministry of the "new Covenant" to which he has been called (iii, 1 ; iv, 6). (2) The new Covenant ministry is not exempt from human and earthly weakness, but is like a treasure in a frail vase (iv, 7 ; v, 10). (3) The new Covenant ministry is not one of self-commendation, but of ambassadorship for God (v, 11 ; vi, 10).

We have, here, that other striking effect which comes to the serious student of this Apostle's life. We may begin to feel that strength and courage which belonged to Paul himself, in which he trusted, and which was the confidence of his entire Christian activity. We may know, despite our human frailties and even inconsistencies, that there is a power of God willing and anxious to use our sincerity to the building up of Christ's Kingdom on earth. We may entirely trust this power, if we, too, in some way are ambassadors of Christ, ministers of this New Covenant which is in Christ and His Spirit.

It is, perhaps, almost impossible for us in this day to appreciate the profound difference Paul felt between the religion of Jesus Christ and that which preceded it. His contrast between the old and new covenant ministries is for him a contrast in personal experiences. Christ is the beginning of a new spiritual era ; He unlocked the doors of a

spiritual imprisonment, created a new order of possibilities for man, offered an absolute freedom from condemnation and death. But more, when men turn to Him, He makes them free in an even more intimate way. The great words of Paul are surely "freedom" and that which we understand by "reality." Christ makes us free, with a new spontaneity and understanding, with a free love to men and a new certainty of God. Christ makes us real, as in the Presence of God, desiring nothing but His glorious presence in our hearts, and He reveals to us that which is real, that which is intrinsically true and of eternal value. All of this Paul means by his new "covenant ministry," but he so knows Christ and is able to preach Him because of the testimony of the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit which has fertilized his every power to discern and proclaim Him Lord ; and accordingly this new ministry is a ministry, for Paul at least, of the Spirit.

PART V

INFERENCES, THEORETIC AND PRACTICAL

CHAPTER XIII

A General Estimate of Paul's Life

"Some of my readers may imagine that my young man was a sickly, ecstatic, poorly-developed creature, a pale, consumptive dreamer. On the contrary, Alyosha was at this time a well-grown, red-cheeked, clear-eyed lad of nineteen, radiant with health. He was very handsome, too, graceful, moderately tall, with hair of a dark brown colour, with regular, rather oval-shaped face, and wide-set, dark-grey, shining eyes. He was very thoughtful and apparently very serene. I shall be told, perhaps, that red cheeks are not incompatible with fanaticism and mysticism, but I fancy that Alyosha was more of a realist than anyone. Oh! no doubt, in the monastery he fully believed in miracles, but, to my thinking, miracles are never a stumbling-block to the realist. It is not miracles which dispose realists to belief. . . . Even if he admits it (miracle), he admits it as a fact of nature till then unrecognized by him. Faith does not, in the realist, spring from the miracle, but the miracle from faith. If the realist once believes, then he is bound by his very realism to admit the miraculous also." (Extract from "The Brothers Karamazow," by Fyodor Dostoievsky.)

PAUL THE REALIST

Despite a very general view to the contrary, Paul is the most practical writer in the New Testament. His interests are wider and far more diversified than any other. Moreover, Paul was a true realist in the best sense of that term, and only a realist can be a practical man. He understood and honestly accepted *himself*, and in the light of it, courageously faced the world. His advantages in life were by no means insignificant. A Jew by birth and upbringing, he had also the privileges of a Roman citizen, was the native of no mean city where Roman customs, manners and prestige would leave a marked impression on his life. He knew the schools and evidently had sat at the feet of a recognized teacher, yet it is evident too he was obliged to make his own livelihood ; and that by the labour of his hands. He was a tent-maker by profession, and thereby understood the difficulties of making a living. At times he seemed to have prospered, but he also feelingly speaks of running low, and therefore knew the value of money and could truly appreciate a gift. His position in the Pharisaic party, no doubt, has been over-estimated, yet the promise of his youthful attainments was considerable and was undoubtedly recognized by those in authority. His religious earnestness and zeal were apparently a by-word in the party. Paul probably understood Pharisaism as few others. His was one of those religious minds (so unlike Gamaliel, who can wait and see) which must know and be satisfied. Perhaps the secret of his sudden

and tremendous conversion lies in the imperative character of his religious yearning, and the openness of his mind to truth, and those things which had the stamp of reality upon them.

It is surprising, if we renew our minds in the details of his letters, how familiar he was with the world of affairs and human interests. He loved the familiar games and contests, and no doubt had often watched them. These, we can understand, would be congenial to a temperament like Paul's. He knew well the composition of an army and was acquainted with every detail of a soldier's private accoutrement. He had watched the ships and had detected the meaning of winds and sky. The seed of wheat, the flesh of beasts, of birds and fishes, bodies terrestrial and bodies celestial were objects of his contemplation. Horses, stables and their refuse, milk for babes, meat for men, gardens, trees and their fruit, buildings, their builders and designers, temples and the Presence which dwelt therein, market-places and the slaves bought and sold, adopted and redeemed, processions, triumphs, hostages and executions, governments and those in authority—all of these formed part of the staple mental diet of the apostle Paul. Probably Paul was better acquainted with religious cults and philosophies than any other apostle or even disciple of Christ ; undoubtedly more so than was Jesus Himself.

But that which most impresses is his knowledge of people. And, although his appeal to Timothy through a beautiful reference to his mother and grandmother and other such intimate touches

give us a glimpse into the domestic sphere of his interest, I do not believe this knowledge of individuals is the striking characteristic about him so much as his stranger knowledge of their inner life. Paul knew men because he knew life—human life as it is inwardly lived under the stress and strain of this world's action upon it. Externals never impressed him because of the infinite mystery and importance of those simple things which provide a common factor to human life itself. Men were men to him, sinners were sinners and saints were saints—nothing very different, withal, when we understand what is going on in their souls. Just variations of attitude to God, to life, to man, but these were everything. To say, as we do sometimes, that a man was rich or intellectual or cultured or of social standing, for Paul, would add nothing at all to the simple realization that he was a living soul. He knew men, and best of all without an effort to do so. That impression we get to-day of one class finding their duty in trying to understand another class, has no place in the impression we get of this apostle. Such at best can never be more than a sort of detached interest. Our chief business, if we are to learn from Paul, is not to try to understand our fellow-men, but to know God, for having seen His face we shall surely see the face of our brother man anew.

This is the true realist; and he is never an unbeliever, for he lives his life in the conscious presence of unseen, mysterious forces, from without and from within, the energy of men's lives as well

as the danger of their souls, which make him indeed believe in the wonder of man, but also in the necessity of God. What is so often understood as the practical man is just the superficial man, vain, independent, because he is in bondage to the immediate and that awful externalism which haunts all life. It is difficult for one who sees life as Paul saw it, to condemn. It is for this very discerning reason that Dostoievsky makes the old, wicked, voluptuous Pavlovitch say to his own son, Alyosha, " and I will wait for you. I feel that you are the only creature in the world who has not condemned me. My dear boy, I feel it, you know. I can't help feeling it." Although his language may, at times, convey the opposite impression, Paul never condemned men. He bewailed their fate, warned them against their seeming destiny, but he hoped all things, and endured steadfastly believing. He was always *himself*——a man saved by the grace of God—accepting life and all its providences as great friendly things, as the very manifestation of the presence of God Himself.

Paul, as a Christian, discovered a *something working* in his thought and affections which created a soul in him like this. He called it, with others, the Holy Spirit : the fact that he could not place it in the category of objective things did not make him dispense with it as something unreal, for no great and enduring thing which Paul knew could be so placed. Besides, its character was too distinguishing and the results from its presence too remarkable. It is everywhere apparent that Paul and the early Church felt that a completely new

energy of God had come into the world, and that because of and since the great facts relative to the manifestation of Christ—His death and resurrection. These men were Hebrews and were well acquainted with the traditional record of the Spirit of God in the lives of their greatest forebears, but this was a new and greater manifestation. It functioned supremely in the ethical and was the permanent possession of every believer rather than a spasmodic visitation, the privilege of the few. Only one definite impression may accordingly be gathered from the records, viz., that for them the Holy Spirit was a transcendent visitation from God as Christ Himself was, and that it was creative of a completely new life in those to whom it became a possession.

It is possible, of course, to believe such an understanding of it to be the result of the limited mental outlook and the inadequate psychological and spiritual perception and apprehension of that time; that this arresting phenomenon was nothing other than a natural consequent of the peculiar psychological atmosphere in which the disciples lived in the first days of the Church. It would be quite as reasonable, we ought also to admit, to explain the unique manifestation of Jesus' life and teachings as something organic to the conditions of the times in which He lived, and, although something of this nature has been suggested at times as an explanation of Jesus Himself, it has as yet had no really serious consideration. The Christian Church arose in, and has continued to dwell in, the conviction of a transcendent, creative God, who revealed Himself

as not before, uniquely and completely, in Jesus the Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Our modern study of harmony opens our minds, however, to possible valuable suggestions in respect to men's belief in an accentuated life when conditions are favourable. There are over-tones from the true harmony of many tones, as also the impression from many diverse keys or instruments is something more than the aggregate of their different productions. So when different people are in one accord under the primacy of one high motive, or even the various powers of a single life are gathered together in unity, subject to the highest purpose a life is capable of, we have the strongest reason to believe that something creative takes place; seemingly new forces of life make their appearance. The Book of Acts says, " They were all with one accord in one place," when the Holy Spirit came upon them. It matters little, however, what may be the Spirit's character or its mode of arising and operation so long as we are assured that it is an essential and not an incidental of the highest and truest faith, and consequently that its source is in God, and that He has determined it to be the illuminating and enriching power of the Christian's life. When the Will of God becomes the will of man, I suppose, the most vital and perfect harmony is effected which may be known on earth. And such an harmony, in itself, may have creative possibilities. Love, joy, peace, are certainly the fruit of God's will being done on earth as in heaven, but the method of God's delegating these to men is beside the fact itself of ordinary consequence.

The Spirit of Jesus in St. Paul

THE ORIGINALITY OF PAUL

A good deal has been written in recent years as to the contribution of Paul to religious thought, and the tendency has been largely to discredit Paul's position as an exponent of the Christian revelation. Either he has been rated as a mere eclectic, or rather a syncretist of religions, or as one who, because of his peculiar temperament or hidebound prejudices, had managed to divert Christianity from its simple teachings and natural channels.

It may as well be recognized at once that Paul discovered no absolutely new truths, nor does he reveal any fresh elemental feelings; but the same may be said of Jesus. The conceptions of sin, repentance, forgiveness, reconciliation in some form or other, and the passions and the hopes, love, joy, peace, faith, etc., have been forms of experience since the beginning of history. No sin, nor passion, nor feeling has a recognized beginning. Our conceptions of these have been greatly deepened and enriched in meaning, and refined, but no one seems to have the responsibility or glory of initiating them. It is true, I think, that new moral conceptions have been born in the course of history and always at a terrible cost, but once set afloat in the world of ideas, never to be lost again. It is one of the interesting comments on the spiritual significance and purpose of life to note that, though material civilization has had many débâcles in which many of its finest mechanical secrets and devices have been lost, no moral or spiritual conception, once

known to mankind, would seem to have found its way to oblivion again. The originality of man, however, even here, is not in creating, but in discovering, defining, deepening, and interpreting.

Paul certainly gave to all the religious conceptions of a uniquely religious people a profundity and glory which these never had in any mind save that of Christ Himself. I suppose he may claim at least something of the originality of a Shakespeare who took some past-century play of very mediocre character and by the touch of his genius made it a thing of truth and beauty for ever. But Paul had a moral and spiritual originality, exceptional and unique, and it consists in the process whereby in his own soul he is able to touch the things of the spirit of man into eternal significance and brilliance, not so much by the spirit of genius as by the Spirit of God. This originality had its origin in the fact that it was given to him to see, once and for all, that Jesus the Christ was the very righteousness of God ("For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Colossians ii, 9), and to be empowered as few have been to surrender his soul, his all, to Him. That seems to be the simplest explanation of this commanding Christian personality, and it has this added advantage, that it is his own.

As to the charge that Paul diverted native Christianity from its true source, two or three considerations should be reflected upon. First, it is well-nigh an impossible thing for anyone to think in the thought-conceptions of ages other than his own, and particularly of those which are yet to come. We

certainly have no right to expect Paul to think and express himself in terms of twentieth century thought-processes and terminology. We do well if we make serviceable use of that terminology and thought-process which belongs to our own age and the country in which we dwell. Paul endeavours to express his Christian experience in terms of Græco-Roman thought-processes, in which there lingers naturally his own Rabbinic cast of mind. It is inconceivable that he should do otherwise.

Although it may not appear so to us, Paul's theological phrases were to that pagan world market-place colloquialism and the commonest local religious terminology. It is part of that wonderful penetration of Jesus that He leaves His religious reflections and feelings in the simplest, the most intimately human and universal terms of life's relations. Nevertheless Paul's world was a different one from that of Jesus; it probably demanded a different treatment and presentation; at least it imposed upon him an additional responsibility. And then, too, what thoughtful person but would admit that the simple conceptions which Jesus uses, such as love, family life, filial relationships, etc., have, in their own unfathomable nature, necessities and powers of which we are not easily aware, but which the penetrating and enquiring mind of Paul felt necessary to analyse and define? Is it not one of the achievements of Paul, this Hebrew of the Hebrews, that he was so eminently successful in giving to an alien people such a true conception of the essence and spirit of Christianity? Then, secondly, may it not be, as was thought up

till half a century ago, and is still believed by the majority of the Church, that there were additional elements in this unique manifestation of God which it was not incumbent upon Jesus to treat because they concerned Himself only as His life became a completed manifestation of the purposes of God? And more, Jesus Himself taught with especial emphasis that any true knowledge of Him must await a spiritual discovery and discernment which could only come to His disciples in the course and progress of their life as His followers. Besides, men could not yet be prepared for new conceptions of His presence, etc., for indeed, these could not come into being until the full functioning of Jesus' earthly life had been completed. There is scarcely any doubt that Paul and the early Church generally so conceived the significance of their new and fuller relation to God in Christ, reflections of which are to be found in all the gospels and especially in that of St. John (e.g., chap. xvi), and note as a specific instance St. John vii, 36-39.

As has been observed before, Paul has turns of thought which leave a wrong impression. He is hampered by thought-conceptions everywhere which are foreign to the pure spirituality of Jesus. The tenacious nature of his Rabbinic training and those features resulting from demands of the circumstances of his active ministry may have intruded themselves too far into his conception of Christianity, indeed confused and obscured for him the simplicity of the gospel; but the Church as a whole has felt impelled to follow him. And there is enough of difficulty and apparent lack of power in

the emaciated forms of theology and presentations of the gospel to which we are treated to-day to make us wonder if Paul and the whole circumstances of his career were not peculiarly adapted and destined in that momentous time to give Christianity that right turn whereby she might alone attain unto her true destiny.

THE SUPREME TASK

We have referred to that complete subjection of his own life to Christ as the secret of Paul's moral and spiritual originality. If Paul's life is a normal one, such subjection, then, would seem to be the great task of the Christian and of the Church. To-day, probably, the Christian is suffering on the one hand from a subtle unbelief in Christianity's practicability; but on the other hand, from far too easy views of his ability to do what Christ has asked of him. Both difficulties arise, no doubt, from a misunderstanding of that which Christ demanded and Paul accomplished.

The seeming impracticability of a Christian attitude to life and a Christian ethic is due for the most part to our worldly manner of approach and expectation. It has been emphasized in these pages that the integral meaning of Christianity is in some way a contradiction of the fashion of this world. Moreover, it has been asserted that the possibility of a religion such as Christ initiated and represented coming into being at all, is conditioned, either in time or in the individual life, by the fact that a venture of faith is necessary in the nature of

which there can be no possibility of weighing pros and cons. Such a demand of man's soul must of necessity appear impracticable, else it loses its real virtue, that which makes it what it peculiarly is. And it is doubtful if such demand is ever met, and the corresponding task undertaken, except under conditions of imperative moral or spiritual urgency. We must, at the same time, appreciate the fact that the call to submit ourselves to God in Christ constitutes the most tremendous challenge and most difficult task which confronts a human soul. It is one of those tasks, too, which remain with Christians throughout their earthly life; for, indeed, the idea of a perpetual, growing apprehension of life and truth is the ruling idea of religious and moral culture.

There are few words of our modern vocabulary so much on our lips as the word "sacrifice." This is not strictly a New Testament word; but it ought to have vital relation with that which is the pressing challenge of the New Testament persuasion. And yet our lavish use of the term conveys a meaning far from the sense of its spirit as revealed in that Book. Of course, neither Jesus, nor Paul at his best, was conscious of sacrifice. They were conscious of right, of goodness and beauty of life, of truth; and the only true way of life known to them was that of exercising their whole moral and spiritual beings in possession and in pursuit of these. The New Testament gives us no evidence of sly side-glances in search of by-products and in hope of after-products.

If "sacrifice" has a meaning for men, distin-

guishing it from the very ordinary diplomacies and prudences of life, it must mean a giving up for good and all, whether that be of possessions, of life, or even of man's very soul; and this for the sole sake of right and goodness, without regard at all for consequence or compensation. It is, as it were, nailing our flag to the mast of truth for truth's sake alone, and because the interests of truth and ourselves are in some way identical. Sacrifice and simple faith ought to be equivalents for a Christian. At any rate, if sacrifice has exceptional meaning and virtue in it, the " something " given up should be vital to our real selves.

A kindergarten teacher of one of our schools was being highly commended for her interest in the children and for the many thoughtful little gifts she gave to parents and children alike. " It must be easy for you to give," someone said. " On the contrary," she replied, with perfect candour, " I find it almost impossible to give up anything which I really value." This is probably a true evaluation of most lives. Notwithstanding, Jesus' challenge appears to reach even deeper, and is of a more encompassing nature (Matt. xvi, 24) : " Then said Jesus unto His disciples, If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me." (A.V. Weymouth : " Let him renounce self and take up his cross and so be my follower." According to this rendering, "following Christ at all " would seem to be conditioned on the fact of the Self being denied or renounced.

It is not something which we are to deny ourselves, but it is ourselves that are to be denied.

The seriousness with which this command has been taken, and the earnestness with which men have tried to carry it out, has constituted one of the most pathetic phases of historic Christianity. It cannot possibly mean that we are to suppress life, for Jesus came to give life and rejoiced in so doing, but it does mean that life's ruling motive must be abandoned entirely in something greater, or rather in something truer. Dean Inge calls our attention to the fact that, "in many places 'life' in our version represents not ζωὴ but ψυχή, which means the individual life . . . the nearest equivalent to 'the Ego.' Our translators have not dared to translate 'he that wishes to save his *soul* shall lose it'; they have thus weakened one of the great texts of the gospel which means a real surrender of the Ego, not a mere willingness to face death. The soul has to die as Soul in order to live as Spirit." —(Outspoken Essays, 2nd series, Confessio Fidei, p. 42.) Weymouth in a foot-note also seems to corroborate this interpretation. And, if this be the sense of meaning Jesus put into these poignant words, is it not precisely the view presented in the whole teachings of Paul? Life, as it is, must achieve a complete victory over itself to inherit life as Paul knew and conceived it.

Then again, the attitude of soul which represents such subjection to God is not only a distinct achievement of faith, but is a revelation of a profound trust —a trust in which nothing matters but God. And yet again, far from being a suppression of true life, it is the only state of mind in which life finds its true freedom, in which its powers are surpassingly

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intensified and enlarged. It is not an eradicating of Self or self-abnegation, but that which is on a higher plane altogether, a *letting go* of Self in the absorbing interests of humanity or in the leading of God. To such condition of mind and soul the reality of God becomes an evident fact of experience, an experience to be entirely trusted. The author of " Painted Windows " tells us of Maude Royden's indebtedness to the experience of that other lady who at a Quaker meeting, after exhausting herself praying, seemed to hear these words, " Yes, I have something to say to you when you stop your shouting." From this, Miss Royden learned to see " the tremendous difference between physical and spiritual silence. She cultivated, with the peace of soul which is the atmosphere of surrender and dependence, silence of spirit; and out of this silence came a faith against which the gates of Hell could not prevail."

Spiritual life is not the product of good and proper form, nor of decorous living. Dignified silence may just be a physical achievement. Spiritual life and true belief find their origin in the soul's perfect silence before God. This repose of soul, if it may be so described, is however not a passive state ; but an unceasingly active, ever alert, pursuit of the Will of God in Christ as revealed by His Spirit.

We have referred to the Will of God. The manifestation of God in Christ was both a revelation of God's Will and also of His nature, so that it is not altogether in Christ's words and teachings that we should look for the fullest and completest impression of God's character, but in the life which

He lived among men. So, too, it is not simply to a Person *per se*, official or unofficial, that the life of the Christian must be subject. It is to that which He, in very reality of nature and character, was and is. Jesus, by deliberation evidently, chose a *way of life* while here on earth, and committed His whole being to it. This *way of life* according to impressions from all the gospels was unique, and was taken to Himself from among others which had sufficient merit at least to arrest His attention. These are the temptations of Jesus, to the meaning of which we shall devote our attention in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XIII

Jesus' Baptism, Temptations and the Spirit

"She might have seen that what had bowed her head so profoundly—the thought of the world's concern at her situation—was founded on an illusion. She was not an existence, an experience, a passion, a structure of sensations to any but herself. To all human kind besides, Tess was only a passing thought. If she made herself miserable the livelong night and day, it was only this much to them: 'Ah, she makes herself unhappy.' If she lived to be cheerful, to dismiss all care, to take pleasure in the daylight, the flowers, the baby, she could only be this idea to them: 'Ah, she bears it very well.'"—("Tess of the D'Urbervilles," Thomas Hardy.)

Those portions of the Synoptic gospels which tell us of Jesus' temptations and their character should reveal to us, if nothing more, *that which Christianity is not.* Moreover, a true understanding of these temptations ought to lead us to the heart of the meaning of Jesus' life and manifest the motive of Christian life itself. The temptations make it plain that Jesus thrust aside certain suggested motives of life, and by so doing revealed life's true motive. That much is certain among other things more indefinite.

The great difficulty lies in the almost hopeless task of giving any adequate expression to the meaning of those three figures in which Jesus had, probably again and again, in the course of His intimate talks with His disciples, tried to convey to them the difficulties of His own soul's life. That the words and analogies which He used are symbolic of profoundly deeper realities, probably no one will deny. That the three temptations in essence are one, and are of the nature of a spiritual persuasion—that is, such temptations must have suggested to Jesus a means to spiritual progress and achievement—most thoughtful people will also allow. The conflict in Jesus' soul would seem to have been a conflict between the " spirit " of human life, at its highest conception as to the way to achieve righteousness and truth on earth, and something supremely higher, if less definable than this—the leading of the Spirit of God. The possibility of such or any temptations exercising any power upon the soul of Jesus, must mean that these were inherent to the whole structure of His human life and environment, so that the subtlety of the temptations dwells in the fact that they suggest a way of life in the execution of God's work which is perfectly ordinary to the purely human mind, its ambitions and inclinations. In a true recognition of this fact, we perhaps alone discover the import and pertinence of Jesus' temptations and the choice He made. So natural to the human heart are the views of life involved in these temptations, that natural man perceives nothing wrong in them ; nevertheless, the motive and view of life presented constitute

for Jesus a something, the very antithesis of the nature and the will of God, and that which He was compelled to utterly reject.

If something like this is the truth about them, it is of no little significance to our view of the essential inner kinship between the life of Jesus and that of Paul, and it is of the utmost importance to the nature of that gospel and the character of that work the Church should be endeavouring to preach and to do. It is also worth our serious consideration to note that in all three records the story of the temptations is linked up with Jesus' baptism by John, and the descent of the Spirit. The Spirit descends upon Him, acknowledges the righteousness of His action in receiving baptism, leads Him or drives Him into the wilderness to be tempted, after which "Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee" (Luke iv, 14).

THE ESSENCE OF LOVE—THE POWER OF IDENTITY

Let us consider, first, the significance of Jesus' baptism. As stated before, all three synoptic gospels record the fact that Jesus came to the Jordan and was baptized by John. The baptism of John was in a sense original with him. It symbolized a cleansing from sin as preparation for the coming Kingdom. It has naturally been asked, then, why Jesus desired for Himself baptism, and even although John demurred, Jesus insisted that it be done. Jesus evidently was unconscious of sin and at no time acknowledged it as having any part in His life. The answer which has the consensus of

assent as an explanation is probably the right one, viz., Jesus by this act desired publicly to identify His life with sinful humanity and thereby dedicate that life to the redemption of humanity. Of course the act itself could only testify to a union already realized, of which He had become more and more conscious, and in which He was perceiving that any power of redemption rested in some kind of supreme identity with sinful mankind. The baptism incident would seem to have provided for Him a public opportunity for a full and final commitment of all His powers to that task to which the Spirit of God had been leading, and an unmistakable call to initiate His active ministry.

It is *this capacity* (which belongs to some choice souls taught by Christ and His Spirit) *for some sort of real identity with another or others* which constitutes one of the most remarkable facts of human experience, and which allows us to understand something of the meaning of that union which identified Christ's life with that of sinful men. Next to that power given us to worship God, the capacity the Christian has to identify himself with other lives is the most wonderful and arresting which belongs to human life. It reveals to us the secret of that redeeming process which undoubtedly operates in this world.

There are distinct foreshadowings of the spirit which it involves in the Old Testament, and these, more than anything else, reveal the continuity of life between the Old and New Testaments. Touches like that recorded as Moses' prayer, after his heart-breaking disappointment over the Israelites' apos-

tasy had spent its first impulse in destructive passion, reveal the highest soul-achievement, we believe, attributed to that great life. When he came to himself he went up into the mountain to pray, probably because he did not know what else to do, and in the words there uttered, we have one of the finest, most pathetically sweet, of all recorded prayers, as well as a revelation of that redeeming spirit which finds its culmination in Jesus Christ. "And Moses returned unto the Lord and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold! Yet now, if Thou wilt, forgive their sin—and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written" (Exodus xxxii, 31, 32). We understand the power of this cry to God in its depth of innocent shame, self-effacement, moral intensity and yearning love, when we contrast it with the spirit of much that is called modern reform. It has a striking kinship, too, with those strange words of Paul, found in Romans ix, 1, 2, 3, "I am telling you the truth as a Christian man—it is no falsehood, for my conscience, enlightened as it is by the Holy Spirit, adds its testimony to mine—when I declare that I have deep grief and unceasing anguish of heart. For I could pray to be accursed from Christ (severed from Christ and devoted to destruction) on behalf of my brethren, my human kinsfolk, for such the Israelites are" (Weymouth).

So far as the Old Testament is concerned this peculiar disposition of soul finds its supreme exemplification in the sublimest of all Old Testament passages, Isaiah liii. Here the sensitive,

discerning soul of the prophet, fresh from a discovery of Israel's real destiny, delivers a new message, the profoundest of all spiritual truths, viz., that by a true identification with the sins of the nations and in suffering on their behalf can Israel hope to redeem them. Israel did not prove great enough to give reality to the prophet's dream, but the unique development of Israel's religious history, issuing as it did in the discovery of this supreme religious truth, provides a phenomenon of unparalleled interest in religious thought.

The dream of the prophet becomes a reality in Jesus Christ, and strangely enough also in some measure in those people who give their lives to Him. This capacity for identity is, as we have already observed, the profoundest experience the human soul is capable of, if we except that strange power of being able to worship God. It is not simply the matter of sharing with others something of their burdens and difficulties, or relieving these (such are so apt to be or become merely external experiences). It is, rather, that constraint of soul in which we are impelled to be something with them. Superiority there must be—and of a very rare character—but the superiority which savours at all of patronage, or is self-conscious, kills or chills the most delicate things of the human heart.

There is a superiority whose greatness lies in the fact that it really feels in itself something of the awful imprisonment of other men's ignorance and sin. This belongs only to the rarest kind of character; it possesses creative powers, in itself, and this, for the redeeming of other men. Jesus

already possessed this spirit when He presented Himself for baptism, but in that act He gave Himself in absolute dedication to whatever life it called for, and there came to Him a profoundly new sense of His relation to God and evidently new powers to do that peculiar work to which it committed Him.

There is to-day, we believe, as not in the lifetime of the oldest among us, an intense hunger for just such a true sympathy, a desire to know and also to be known. The best of modern literature, including fiction, reflects this undertone of modern life. These authors are exercising themselves in the search for and definition of a completely new type of character—a character nevertheless which is old to the world. There is the evident feeling of a need of a sympathy, a deep understanding, which in any large measure we do not possess. The very superficiality and gaiety of our age may in reality be its defence against a world which does not understand, and which reveals no power to appreciate what is going on in the soul.

There would also seem to be a call for a new ethic—an honour, not so much as between man and man, as something which speaks and is answered within man's own soul. These writers are calling for men of conscience whom our materialistic age has not produced, and perhaps cannot produce. These same authors have also perceived that any sympathy which is vital is the product of a true, if not a purified and purged, conscience. In Church and State, in the whole fabric of life, we are left with the impression that it is their conviction that, although we talk and write in the approved language

of religion and idealism, we have lost the spiritual possession itself. Accordingly we have prefaced this chapter on the baptism and temptations of Jesus with those challenging words of Thomas Hardy ; for these reveal the burden of much of the more recent fiction and express the deep need of modern life. It is of little consequence whether we manage to justify or refute such words as a true or an extreme accusation against modern society. For our own part we believe them to be no arrogant affront to human society, but a simple statement of truth, which, because of its very nakedness and its profound discernment of the need of the human soul, appears extraordinary. It lays upon our conscience a matter which in a very general way is a fact, and impels the conviction that human life, as it is, does not meet the deeps of human longings and necessities.

Human life needs a renewing in and by the Spirit of God. The transformation which Paul experienced in Christ found its ethical deliverance in just that true sympathy and sensitive conscientiousness which Hardy and more recent writers find difficulty in discovering in the conditions of our present-day life.

THE TEMPTATIONS

Whatever content we may think fit to put into the words, " Thou art My beloved Son, in Thee I am well pleased," we are forced to conclude that Jesus in His baptism became fully persuaded of His unique relation with God the Father, became conscious, perhaps, of new powers which involved

a supreme responsibility for Him in the life of mankind.

Several considerations, peculiar to these temptations, which follow immediately God's acknowledgment of His Sonship, have a right to special attention.

First.—The peculiar wording with which two of the temptations are prefaced, "If Thou be the Son of God," would seem to indicate that His conviction of His Sonship was still for Himself in the form of an imperative presumptive, the validity of which needed proving in the work and conduct of life. We might, therefore, infer that Christ's life, despite its unique consciousness of God, was purposed to be supremely a pilgrimage of faith in point of detail and in its entirety. Accordingly His ministry must initiate itself upon a supreme act of faith, upon a conviction somehow acquired, but, as it were, not as yet perfectly realized.

Second.—This action of faith having been accomplished, the perplexity confronting Jesus would seem to have regard to the way in which He was to exercise this supreme prerogative.

In view of this fact, two things, partly anticipated in the beginning of this chapter, should be clear in our minds. *First*, that these temptations of Jesus were real temptations. The question as to whether they came to Him after the Baptism once for all, or whether they were present with Him throughout life, need not trouble us. Doubtless they came to Him in the wilderness with power, as it is evident also that the subtle variations of the circumstances

of life revealed their presence in other forms to the end of His earthly career.

We shall only understand Jesus, however, and the wonder and the significance of His life, if we begin to see that, next to His victory over them, the temptations themselves constitute the reallest factor in His life. We must remember that the account we have of them could only come from His own lips, that the impression made upon Him must have been so real and obstinate that He felt impelled to tell His disciples about it, and so vivid was the impression conveyed, that the records have given the temptations a position of prime importance in the gospels.

Secondly, the crucial point of the temptation would seem to have revolved around the method of exercising His life in His unique relation to God and to man. The issue is between the way of God and other ways which so plausibly suggest themselves. We notice that Jesus answers each successive temptation, as it were, from the platform of God—some higher claim, infinitely more difficult in responsibility and necessitating a far supremer faith. Is not, then, His temptation, somehow, an inclination or suggestion to disavow, or treat as not absolutely necessary, the responsibility which the baptism implied—*the responsibility of Love as God knows and is Love, the very essence of which is a profound redemptive identity with the human race?* The very perfection of Jesus' life in its purity, penetration, and delicate sensitiveness forbids our understanding at all as He did the awful nature of the claims such a responsibility laid upon Him,

and yet it seems strangely true that it is to such specific responsibility that Christ calls every individual disciple of His, and that to the men and women who accept it in faith He gives the power to gain some access in knowledge and achievement in that infinite task. Is it not the Christian's experience of such deepening and enriching of his powers as an acceptance of this responsibility involves which is the cause of his conviction of the eternal truth of the Christian revelation ?

As to the meaning of each individual temptation, probably the following interpretations accord best with all the immediate facts and circumstances, and the subsequent experience of the Church ; although any interpretation must of necessity fail to appreciate the reality of the powers with which Jesus contended. We shall use Matthew's order, for in it we find that cumulative effect not in Luke's version.

First Temptation.—" Command that these stones be made bread." This temptation probably finds its suggestion to Jesus' mind in the fact of His intense hunger, and is strengthened by His intimate knowledge of the poverty of many in that land of meagreness in which the asking for daily bread becomes a perfectly natural petition in the prayer He gave to His disciples. His compassion for such people would be heightened, and reflections on life's meaning would be effected as He again, in the wilderness, thought of them with the pangs of hunger gnawing at His own vitals. Besides, from childhood He had been instructed in the great fact of Israel's deliverance from the bondage of

Egypt by the hand of God, of the miraculous interventions, the manna from heaven, etc., by which the people had been sustained during their sojourn in the wilderness. But more important, He was fully acquainted with that glorified materialism of certain contemporaneous apocalyptic expectations in which the very earth would in the "Day of the Lord" abound in those things which man would eat and drink. Probably, too, He was not ignorant of that far-off but determined cry of the Roman populace, "Give us bread and games." To him who could satisfy such human longings there was assured a following and a power, to dwarf the significance of that of the Caesars, an empire co-extensive with the world and coetaneous with the ages.

We have here the whole impetus of the reasonableness of materialism pounding at the gates of the spiritual citadel. No temptation is more subtle and seductive, and the world is ever under its power. Give us favourable circumstances, comfort and wealth, long life, a right environment, and we shall be a great, a righteous and a happy people. The answer of Jesus is decisive: "Thou shalt not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God."

Second Temptation.—"Cast Thyself down; for it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee." This would appear to be a temptation to create *faith and loyalty* by the use of the extraordinary or the exceptional. The gospel writers impress us with the fact that Jesus did work mighty works which to His disciples and

those who followed Him were the veriest miracles, but they seem also careful to reveal that Jesus wrought no miracle on His own behalf, to save Himself from something, or to inspire or fortify belief in or loyalty to His own Person or cause. He did not work miracles to create faith but because faith was already present.

We dare not assume that Jesus was ever tempted by that grosser and cheaper kind of sensationalism which has so large a place in modern Church life, nor again, by the superstitious kind of darker ages, nor even by that foolish and dazzling kind which a literal interpretation of the words of the text might supply. Such could not possibly be temptations to Jesus. Dr. Orchard, I believe, has made a suggestion to this effect, that Jesus was tempted to attain by His own virtues and powers the highest position that the Temple offered, and then, by way of revealing how insignificant the value of such eminence, to cast Himself down (to give it up) and become an ordinary man. To reveal primarily, I suppose, that value and worth lie in human character and not in position, and that human character has in itself the power to vindicate that claim. Probably the very subtlest temptation, at any rate, which comes into a good man's heart takes some such form as this. It is the intense desire to be vindicated in terms which the ignorant (the flesh-and-blood race) may understand. We witness this mood in Elijah : " Let it be known this day that Thou art God in Israel, and *that I am Thy servant.* Hear me, O Lord, hear me. That *this people may know* that Thou art the Lord God "

(1 Kings xviii, 36, 37). However much we have appreciated the story of Carmel in our early years, and however human Elijah's appeal for a vindication in the eyes of his people, such a desire is a form of vanity—if vanity of the noblest kind. Furthermore, any such demonstration of the will and power of God fails to achieve the purpose for which it is sought ; such cannot create any vital faith in God as the spectacular Carmel episode proved, and as Elijah's more matured experience eventually discovered. The opportunity to cast that thing which men so blindly appreciate in the faces of its devotees as a thing utterly valueless, makes a tremendous appeal to men who in vain are endeavouring to do good and make known its true character. But even when such opportunity is given, it is fruitless of any valuable results. There is in it no power to create faith as Christians have learned to know that experience. "The things of the Spirit of God are spiritually discerned." Jesus answered, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

Third Temptation.—"All these things will I give unto thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship Me." If such a temptation conveys to us any meaning which we may with some degree of clearness apprehend, it possibly takes this form. It is the temptation to believe that the powers of this world have a completeness in themselves to advance all vital interests of truth, or perhaps, it is the disposition to believe that there are potential in life, as it exists in this world, the necessary causes to evolve a spiritual Kingdom. If such interpretations approach at all to any adequate expression

of its meaning, it is difficult to measure the sweep of its influence, and the power with which it of necessity must continually beset life, and especially modern life. Its power lies in the fact that human life is, itself, ordained to seek and find God, and is furnished with every goodly gift to that end. There is, besides, so much in life to bring about those things which our hearts yearn after and cherish. There is every good inspiration of our own souls. There is the influence of men, of prestige, of intellect, of wealth. There is the power of force, of legislation, of kindly atmospheres, of organization, of convention. All of these, we believe, are necessary agencies in the production of the highest life, but in themselves there is probably one thing they are totally powerless to effect. It is the thing for which Jesus came to this world, lived and died. Nothing but the power of *pure love* can transform life, or re-create character. Nothing can cause men to worship—to use the adversary's pertinent word—which is, indeed, the highest act of which the soul of man is capable, but the experience of that love in its creative power. This is particularly true when such love is entirely unmerited. The recipient finds it to be a free gift, which in turn, makes him free from any or every bondage of life, and which impels him to worship God. This temptation touches Jesus with exceptional power, for His rejection of it is most vehement. "Get thee behind Me, Satan. Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." Something in this temptation evidently constituted a subtle denial of the necessity of that kind of life

to which the Spirit of God was unmistakably leading Him.

Do not, as we have already observed, the three temptations resolve themselves into one? These are temptations which at no time have meaning for the world, but they constitute the distinct temptations of the Christian and of the Christian Church, and will continue to do so. They are symptomatic of an inadequate appreciation of the infinite task and responsibility which the redemption of sinful nature laid upon Jesus, of the debt we owe Him, of our continued absolute dependence on the leading of God's Spirit. They induce us to a belief in easier solutions, in methods more spectacular, and apparent to the reason of men. *We have in them the temptation to believe that there are more real factors in life than the unobtrusive presence and power of God, that, moreover, there is a higher virtue on earth than the courage to trust that power, that, above all, there is something more wonderful in life than just ordinary life lived according to the Will of God.* To meet such a temptation successfully constitutes the most searching test of our Christian profession and experience; for does it not require implicit trust and obedience, the power to hear God's voice and to refuse to hear any other? This necessitates spiritual perception of a rare order, patience and perseverance, humility and a long-suffering love of a kind which must find its source only in God. There is made known to us in the course of any such discipline the fact that Christian warfare is no abbreviated course, no spectacular affair, but a labour of love of a life-

time's duration, and in the commonest things and simplest virtues of life, where men are willing to accept that burden which was His. Such a course (which finds confidence at all among our convictions, we believe, only because it is of God's instigation and leading) eventuates in a new life which proceeds from our entire personality, in which every activity, great or small, is of a character with it, and is determined by it.

From the testimony of Luke we are led to believe that after Jesus' triumph in the wilderness the Spirit of God somehow took possession of Him with power, and the challenging nature of His words and mighty deeds was from that time forward everywhere apparent.

Nevertheless, we believe, it was Jesus' full acceptance of and loyalty to the responsibility which His baptism implied which caused Him, in course of time, to be a disappointment to all the expectations of the Jews. It is not too much to claim that Jesus failed in almost everything which mattered to His Jewish contemporaries. It is not true of the active ministry of Jesus, if we allow for a few exceptions, that He grew in favour with men. The story of His ministry seems to have been, that as the people got to know Him in His truly inward character, they found it necessary to depart from Him, or for the most part to give Him but a shy allegiance. Even His own devoted disciples found it a perplexity to follow Him. And this growing anticipation of failure, which eventually proved itself a reality in the minds of the people, constitutes from evidence in the gospels one of the

most painful perplexities of His own life and perhaps the most poignant test of His faith. There was, and is, an incalculable something about Jesus which makes the task of seriously following Him impossible, except by a radical transformation in the ordinary motive of life, and the abandoning of that which, in very respectable circles, is falsely conceived as life. There is also a subtle obstinacy in the human soul which makes such a demand as Jesus' life constitutes its supreme challenge, and, when undertaken, an act of faith of the highest possible nature.

The extraordinary success and powers of Paul's life are due to nothing so much as to the fact that he so successfully discerned the inner meaning of Jesus' life, and accepted its motive and principle unreservedly for himself. We do not mean to assume that it was from a painstaking study of Jesus' life and temptations that he discovered its meaning. Far from that, it is not probable that Paul ever gave Jesus' life that kind of consideration at all, any more than thousands of Christians in every age who have learned to know Jesus and the power of His life have done so. A knowledge of Christ does not thus come to us. It comes from a sincere desire to know Him in which two things play a part, first, a whole-hearted surrender to Him in faith ; second, a spiritual confirmation of and testimony to the righteousness of such faith and to the Lordship of Christ, in the degree to which our surrender has been sincere.

The success and unsurpassed powers of Paul's life are, I think, denied by none. Even opponents

of Pauline theology deplore the success with which this apostle captured the mind of the Christian Church, and has continued to do so. The accusation is sometimes made that the Church is thinking in conceptions of Paul rather than in those of Jesus. Nevertheless, we cannot believe that Paul himself was ever aware of success in the way in which we conceive his success. This very Church in Corinth which has been the subject of our consideration, may (according to one single tradition which is of doubtful value) have had an existence of fifty years or more, but its existence after that apparently had not been productive enough to perpetuate a single memory.

The impression lies strong upon us that many of the Pauline Churches, like Corinth, had serious difficulty in adjusting the new life to the cherished conventions and customs inherited from the past. Paul must have felt at times that adversaries from without and dissensions from within made the future of many of these newly established Churches very uncertain. Besides, at best, these little communities which believed in Christ constituted in reality but insignificant dots in the vast complex of the life and domains of the Roman Empire.

It would have been the sanest kind of judgment on the part of a contemporary of Paul to believe that his whole life's work, in the presence of other vast movements of thought at the time, was of very indifferent value, and that the truth which he preached, considering it only in its immediate setting of time and circumstance, presented a view of life which must fail ; and indeed at that time was

without influence in all those great interests which were of consequence to men. One wonders at the abounding confidence of this man throughout his career and in his last days. It teaches us again that spiritual achievement and progress are never to be measured by the ordinary conceptions of success at all. Our very worst delusion, as Christians, is to believe so. Disorder may be symptomatic of life, of the presence of the Spirit ; and harmony and unity where convictions are held in lease may mean that the Spirit has been quenched. Neither can spiritual accomplishment be measured by mathematics, so elusive are its true achievements to the discernment of men. Paul's confidence lies in something in his own soul, in the reality of unseen forces in establishing a new character, in a victorious life of simplest truth and profoundest devotion accompanied by unalloyed peace and joy in the midst of most contrary influences and antagonisms.

It may appear absurd to ask if the modern Church is at present qualified to receive that Spirit which empowered the life of Paul ; and yet, in view of the fact of what Christ's life seems to have been in its central motive, and also Paul's in those strange sources of life which gave him power and assurance—in that he could in the beginning forsake the established and revered faith of his fathers at the impulse of some new leading, and then be content to live his life as a fool among men (this is not an exaggerated description of his whole Christian career if we are able to see it in the light of his own times, and indeed, in the light of his own mind),

and furthermore, in view of the present-day fact that churchmen themselves are everywhere deploring the Church's lack of power and prestige in the world—there would seem to be ground for confidence in asking the pertinent question : Is the modern Church real enough, earnest and true enough, noble enough in mind and spirit to acquire the courage to fail—*to fail in some such sense that Jesus and Paul failed?* Have we as ministers, as officials, as a Christian people much that is analogous to that spirit which is central to the life of Jesus and that of the greatest of Apostles? *This courage to fail*, if we have had reason to know it at all, even in the most ordinary experiences of Christian effort, is surely the highest virtue of the finest nature ; and it would seem in some way or other imperative to Christian life ; for is it not indissolubly linked up with the character and teachings of the founder of the Christian religion?

"How did Christianity rise and spread among men?" asked Carlyle a century ago. "Was it by institutions, and establishments, and well arranged systems of mechanism? NO! . . . It arose in the mystic deeps of man's soul ; and was spread by the preaching of the Word, by simple, altogether natural and individual efforts ; and flew like hallowed fire from heart to heart, till all were purified and illuminated by it."

CONCLUSION

" Whenever Paul speaks of the Spirit we can feel the quick pulse of his own religion " (Weinel).

We have endeavoured in the foregoing pages to make the claim that the essential thing in religion is a real *apprehension of God* which is neither a purely intellectual or moral, nor yet an emotional experience of life. I do not know that we can, or ought to endeavour to give it clearer definition. It is the spirit of man apprehending the Spirit of God in a peculiar consciousness of and sensitiveness to wrong, in love and mercy, and in a higher leading than this world grants us. We cannot but believe that the Spirit of God should be the most important and most present factor in this realistic world. We also believe that God's Spirit is among us in order that men may know it and be guided by it ; although it is also easy to believe that it, like all other precious things of God in human life, is never to all, or indeed to any, perfectly apparent. It is an unobtrusive Presence, easily grieved away and sometimes quenched, but it waits at the door of every soul and is quick to enter at the behest of the slightest need.

The Christian religion, and the importance we should put on God's Spirit as its essential inspiration, have both suffered from two extreme and antithetical views. On the one hand, in their eagerness to

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define and make real to themselves and others the fact of the Holy Spirit men have been inclined to give a purely mechanical description of it, and its work in the human heart. Perhaps Paul errs in this respect to some extent. These same people have also had a tendency to conceive the Spirit as something entirely external to human life, making itself known in extravagant and useless manifestations which too often reveal no appreciable effects on the inner conscience of men. No longer can anything but a truly ethical enlargement and enlightenment of life hope to be the test of the possession of the Spirit.

On the other hand, the fact of the Spirit has been so modified in so-called Christian circles (if not altogether dismissed from the category of real things), as to make it practically identical with the natural evolution of the laws of moral progress. This is distinctly not the testimony of the New Testament or of the Apostle Paul. The Spirit for early Christians was the creative power of the Church, giving its members a distinguishing ethic and filling their hearts with an all-comprehensive, unconquerable love. In those early days of the Church there was some great, vivid and abiding experience, too subtle, perhaps, for us to grasp, but too palpable for them to mistake, making for a community of believers, whose power, and tenacity of purpose and hope, have proved the spectacle of the ages and the mockery of all reason. Behind all the records of their words and actions and achievements, there was a something moving in the hearts of men, the majority of whom had never

seen this Jesus Whom they called Lord. To this spiritual background modern scholars have given but indifferent attention ; and yet it is true of all in that primitive Church as Weinel claims for Paul, that " when they speak of the Spirit you feel the quick pulse of their own religion." You feel you are at the source of their light and of their knowledge of Christ.

To say that the essential thing in religion is not purely intellectual, emotional, or moral, is of course not to dissociate it from these. Since the faculties of man function in thought, feelings and imperatives inherent to his soul, he will always be compelled to express his deepest experience in their terms ; and that experience will need to prove its substantial and true value in qualities of life which cannot be other than these. But such, in themselves, and in their otherwise highest functioning, are apt to be external to pure religion except in so far as they receive a peculiar nature from it. These phases of our functional life may only form part of that " Soul " (the psychical self) which Paul contends must give way wholly and entirely before Christ in order that they (these phases of life) be not possessions, externally and traditionally received and discerned ; but that they may become immediate apprehensions of the soul.

This, of course, ought to constitute a very radical view of religion, especially in days when we have come to think of almost everything in terms of natural development from lower to higher forms of life. And yet, just why anyone should too confidently take his stand on such a positive and precise

view of life is not quite clear in view of our historic knowledge of the eclipse of many civilizations which seem to have reached a very high place in intellectual, æsthetic and even moral achievement. The presence of something else would seem to have been necessary to give them permanent character, and to prevent them from so exhausting their inherent powers and capacities that they fell a prey to weaker things, and became a mere shadow of their former greatness.

It is exceedingly difficult, we confess, to harmonize those conditions for the salvation of man's soul, imposed by Paul, with much that is more recently modern, based especially on a psychological analysis of man's habits and behaviour, and relying too confidently on a strictly mechanical or organic evolutionary view of life. We have no quarrel with either scientific psychology or the evolutionary theory, for we believe that the great creative agencies which alone make for true life may be discovered by both methods, but can be explained by neither. But that disposition so evident to-day, to modify or dismiss all and everything which savours of the inexplicable, that biological outlook which deplores all changes, however slight, in the processes of growth which cannot be explained by some resident forces within the processes themselves, that suspicion and distrust of any qualitatively new thing entering the domains of life, have, we believe, eaten their way too deeply into our modern Christian outlook and determined too surely the methods we employ. This has come to pass to a greater extent than we are aware, so difficult is it to think

and act independently of the spirit of the age in which we live.

Paul's view has very little kinship with it, and historic Christianity itself is, at least, the striking exception to its rule. Paul's conception of the individual's salvation seems to be in perfect accord with his larger conception—that of the whole Christian revelation, and his conception of the infinite mystery of the incarnation, life and death of Christ is in perfect harmony with that of the whole New Testament.

The claim that this Jesus, a sinless One, the Christ, God incarnate in the flesh, should live among men, die an ignominious death on the Cross, rise again and be alive, is a violation of all the laws of natural development, and a contradiction to all ordinary sense. This initial fact is the stumbling-block to all naturalistic philosophies of Christianity, as it is also the touchstone of all that can legitimately be called Christian belief. If quarrel must be made with Paul concerning his conviction of the Holy Spirit and the necessities he imposes in the salvation of men, that quarrel should begin with his extraordinary conception of Jesus Christ. Paul's conception of the Holy Spirit, although he never attempts to define it in essential character, is, at least, in perfect accord with his view of Christ, in that both are transcendent manifestations; and his view of a Spirit-filled man—a new man on a different plane of living altogether—as over against a psychical Soul, even if it were not the result of his Christian experience, would be but a necessary and natural consequent.

We seem, accordingly, to be dealing with two distinct theories of religion and life, and such cannot be characterized as merely an ancient theory as opposed to a modern theory, for the idea of development is as old as serious thought itself, and it was such which motived the whole religious outlook of the Greek on its practical side. Of course, our modern view and methods of religion are determined largely by the influence of modern science, for which the writer has the very highest respect. For, apart altogether from its accomplishment in things material—it has in this virtually created a new world—and the advantage, hardly less noteworthy, which its method of approach has given to the understanding of the morals and the spiritual history of mankind, science has enunciated principles of tremendous significance to Christianity. Its insistence on the unity of all life, a doctrine practically akin to that of the sovereignty of God, has given all the practical value of that former doctrine in its emphasis upon God's immutable nature and sovereignty over all life, and also a new emphasis to those important conceptions of the solidarity of the human race.

Science has revealed as nothing has ever done, if not the dominance, yet the terrible sincerity of law, yielding a moral theory of the universe more exacting than any which theology has ever propounded, as well as a theory of retribution harsher and more hopeless than that of George Eliot. In the gospel which science preaches there is no room for fickle character, for insincere thinking or living, for any of the shrewd diplomacies of life.

All such defeat themselves, and in this respect it is proving a mighty abettor to the ethic of Jesus Christ, although it entirely fails to offer, as Christ in Himself did, any solution of this abject severity.

The methods, and certain definite results, of the evolutionary theory of life are, we may be sure, with us to stay ; but that does not mean that we are to be encompassed in an absolute sterility of life, where the initiative, impulse and response of God-inspired souls are not the very greatest things which mould and guide human destiny.

Much that is modern in method and religious achievement seems to have more kinship with ancient Greek development idealism than with the conviction of Paul of the necessity for complete and radical transformation in the soul of man. These views of life, we believe, are not necessarily mutually exclusive in their processes of operation, but it makes the vastest difference as to which we assign the initiative in the production of true and vital religion.

Our modern confidence in the essential goodness of human nature has, some believe, resulted in a Christianity little better than a kind of galvanized paganism. For Jesus, true religion began in an action of will upon man's whole character and environment, and as often upon character which was counted reputable to a degree and on environment assumed to be ideal, as upon such considered the very opposite. It is this impressive fact, too little considered in modern studies of Jesus' life and ministry, which has perplexing significance for any easy solutions of the redemption of mankind.

MYSTICISM AND ETHICS

When an attempt is made to analyse the practical significance of Paul's apprehension of God, we find two chief emphases. First, *the basis of Christian experience is a divine mystery*, both in its conception and its continuing generative powers. For lack of a better word, Paul's Christianity must be described by the term Mysticism. Of course it is a mysticism of a very refined nature, issuing in judgment-values of purely moral and spiritual character. The materialistic mysticism of nature cults, whether it be found in primitive or in more highly developed forms of religion, the superstitions of sacerdotalism, pagan or Christian, and those nebulous vagaries of pantheism, ancient or modern, form no part of true Christian mysticism. These all come from too low conceptions of the character of God. If Christianity in the beginning was compromised by any such conceptions, they had no place in the communion which Jesus had with the Father, and, so far as we can see, in that fellowship which Paul undoubtedly had with Christ. Nevertheless, that man may directly commune with God is the foundation of all Christian conviction. The Christian's conception of God is that of One, the Father, Holy, altogether Righteous, Who dwells and functions in Love, and in Whom righteousness and love are somehow one and the same. The Christian has real intercourse with God in a sense of forgiveness and mercy, in gratitude and wonder, in an unmistakable sense of sonship and brotherhood, in moral and spiritual under-

standing. These, however, are no mere intellectual ideas, but immediate experiences—an apprehension of God in Christ as a presence in our lives. Paul's mysticism moreover is not of that philosophic type where the figure of Christ fades into insignificance ; but is, as it were, an apprehension of redemptive experiences, with Christ as their supreme centre and source.

Second, *the highest fruit of this mysticism is a new ethic*, also an immediate and authoritative impression in man's soul, and " the " ethic of Christianity and " the " love to which we have already referred as the supreme fruit of the Holy Spirit, are, as in the case of God's righteousness and love, somehow one and the same. Love, in the Christian heart, when it is disposed towards God, is a supreme devotion to the glory of His righteous and holy character; when directed towards man it is a thing sprung from God's own Spirit, giving a completely new value to life.

There are two familiar sayings which convey a meaning far surpassing that of ordinary morals, and which reveal features of that ethic so much needed to-day. Our whole moral sense needs something of that purifying of God which Paul seemed to know. If there is not such a high and holy cleansing of men's lives all we can say, is, *there ought to be*. We have heard it said of someone, " he cannot do wrong," which means that there is a sensitiveness in certain people's souls to what is right and good, and a love for these which absolutely forbids any known violation of them. It is an attitude of soul which is not gathered from custom

and convention, but is an "inner honour," which belongs to the man himself and constitutes an authority far more impressive than any external one. Then, too, there is the homely saying, "he could not hurt a living soul for all the world." This reveals a sensitiveness to the rights and feelings of others and to the infinite value of life itself, and constitutes the determining factor in the attitude we should have to all manner of men. Such an ethical disposition as these ordinary sayings imply, transcends all ordinary morality as Love transcends law. As Dr. L. P. Jacks claims, "Christianity was not concerned with the moral law, it was concerned with the transcending of all law by the spirit of understanding." No words could more truly express the impression we get from Paul as to the inner meaning and power of Christianity. Somehow or other, it is that finer enlightenment of God's Spirit upon man's soul which must provide, again, an ethic for our own times. Out of the heart of a mysticism such as Paul possessed comes the only worthy righteousness, the only true love.

We somehow discover that truth which is in Christ, not by intellectual search, nor even by fasting or prayer—not supremely by these—but chiefly by action ; not at all mere external activity, but by radical action of will upon our complete selves. We need not ever expect, given the most suitable conditions, that we are likely simply to grow into a knowledge of the creative forces of life, of the possible heights and depths of soul experiences, and one is compelled to believe, at

times, that it is from the lack of such knowledge that religion is suffering to-day. We shall come to this kind of knowledge by decisions of will for God, in which our whole life is somehow or other involved. And it is very questionable if the modern mechanical mood by which we are endeavouring to interpret religion—though we speak so freely and confidently of idealism and spirituality—is either capable of producing or of appreciating these creative forces which distinguished the religion of the Old Testament and particularly that of the New Testament.

Perhaps the most direct and practical result in religious activity—of the captivity of the modern mind to the methods and discoveries of modern science—is to be seen in the extraordinary emphasis laid in recent years on the training of the young. This eager investigation into the mind and habits of youth cannot fail in course of time to be of real value, for even if as yet the investigations have uncovered very little that kindly wisdom did not know long ago, and the experiments and methods have only proved tolerably satisfactory, in time they must lead to a larger understanding of the whole problem. Such earnest investigation has been based on the conviction that the purposes of life are served best by giving our energies to life's preservation from the powers of evil, rather than to its reclamation and redemption after evil has done its work. This is a perfectly commendable endeavour if we are careful to understand the real nature of evil—if we recognize sin and not sins as the real enemy of human life. At any rate, we

have the emphasis the Church is putting on early environment, on the potentialities of the human soul, and on an accurate understanding of the various needs of the different states of life's development.

It remains, however, still to be seen if modern psychology has really discovered the distinguishing nature of a human soul—even when that soul is the soul of a boy or girl of ten or twelve or fifteen years of age. Perhaps the greatest fault lies in the fact that in the very mechanism of the whole thing, real religion is apt to escape us, and in the elaboration of the programmes entailed, precious energy and time are likely to be expended and life's youthful problems and real purposes remain unsolved and uneffected.

There has also been a serious tendency of late years in the Church in this enthusiasm for the young to neglect many others whose claim on the Church is quite as great, and whose importance to the Church itself is even more urgent as circumstances are to-day. We need not ever expect to save our children, in any general way, until we save their parents and sanctify their homes. This one-sided attitude is the result of an unacknowledged, but nevertheless a certain, unbelief in the creative power of Christianity. It has become almost notorious how the main branch of the Christian Church is failing to touch or influence, except through occasional special missions, the outcast portion of humanity ; and it is almost as conspicuous how little power she has over ordinarily respectable men and women whose habits have

become fixed, and who happen to be outside the particular interests of the Church institutions.

Some of our officials in the department of religious education give the definite impression that the only hope of the Church and of the world lies with the young, and that in their new psychoanalysis they have discovered a panacea for all the evils and failures of the past. Old methods of child training are disparaged in the light of the wonder of the new. One's own wonder sometimes is how this poor old world in all those vistas of years which preceded this present generation ever managed at all without the presence of these men and their newly discovered methods of child training.

It is interesting by way of contrast to note the methods, or lack of methods, of Paul. So far as we have knowledge, Paul did not give particular preference in his ministry to the young. He worked from the top, or perhaps better, from the centre of the age scale, down, rather than from the bottom, up. Of course it may be argued that circumstances such as shortness of time, and general psychological conditions, determined his method. Even so, Paul achieved success, and the far more important thing is the fact that he lived in the conviction that the gospel of Christ was a power to change completely men's characters, no matter how fixed and how set their habits had become.

"In Jesus Christ," to use his own words, "he begat" all manner of people, young men and maidens, young married couples and parents

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with children, people from the dregs of society—"for such were some of you"—as well as many from that God-fearing class, the best and most earnest, apparently, of that time. Furthermore, we do not know Paul if we do not believe that his was a message of great hope and comfort to those in declining years whose life had been well spent, and also particularly to those who in their sin and hopelessness had found Christ and were now established in Him.

The Church must apportion her strength to all conditions of life, and give that strength unreservedly in high hope and expectancy of undreamed-of results. To fail to do this seems to point to a failure somewhere of a true realization of what this gospel is, and to some extent to invalidate the fact as well as the promise of Christ. The apparent lack of faith, now-a-days, in folk over thirty years of age who do not happen to belong to our institutional religion, is a sign that we are not perceiving in the first place what every great religious leader has always perceived, viz., that too precise classifications are most deceiving, and early environment and training afford at best but a kind of guiding; for the spontaneity of religion upsets all laws and works by the directest and simplest methods, and the depths of the human soul in its instinct for religion defy all calculation.

And in the second place it reveals the fact that we have not discerned what Jesus would seem to have discerned with force, that sometimes the institutions of religion themselves provide the chief obstacle to people's faith; more, that men and

women in the turmoil and uncertainties of this life are, after all, souls who stand day and hour on the very border of that great spirit-land, the Kingdom of God, for which their souls were especially fashioned by the unerring hand of God Himself, and to which the whole irresistible push of the unescapable events and happenings of life is for ever driving them.

If we could, moreover, ascertain the required data, the history of the Church as a whole would likely show that the gospel of Christ has appealed largely to two age-periods in life, the comparatively young and the old ; although it is probably also true that it has been in the middle period of life that many of its most distinguished leaders have either accepted Christianity or discovered its real meaning. Probably too, historically, the story of Christianity is that it has won its converts chiefly from two classes, the very highest and the very lowest. I mean from the most sensitive and thoughtful people and from those who have been outcast to the so-called good and esteemed things of life. At least such classes are most likely to test and appreciate its vital force. The rest of human society, so far as it really has been Christianized at all, has been permeated by a reflection rather than by the direct light of the truth as it is in Christ.

There has always been a goodly proportion of "Judaized" Christianity in the great centre areas of the Christian social strata. These have been people in whose lives regulations, laws and conventions have been the motive to right living

rather than the Spirit which gave direction and impetus to the life of Paul. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God they are the sons of God"; this, for him, was the decisive mark of Christian discipleship.

In recent years more than previously we have been constrained to recognize, and perhaps to realize, that which is a very great truth, viz.: that it takes *all* of life to make a message of God true. In our individual lives we need to experience love, sympathy, joy, happiness and peace, or feel the need of such. But quite as truly is it necessary to know responsibilities, duties, discipline, temptations, trials, sorrow, disappointments and even failures.

To refuse these or any portion of them is so far to refuse life itself, and minimize our chances of knowing God's truth. The tragedy of life is that we can and do refuse many of these greatest and kindliest of God's gifts. The melancholy fact is that so few of us have learned to make our burdens our teachers—our friends. But more is still required to make God's great messages the deep convictions of our life. We must, above all, acquire a certain attitude of soul, throughout all life's varying, perplexing and challenging circumstances, to which the Spirit of God may respond.

With the race itself, time, history, tremendous experiences, the eternal urge and struggle upwards, these condition and increase its capacity to interpret the great messages of God, and alone yield that quality of conviction by which men have been able to say: "Thus saith the Lord"; "the

judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether." There is no such thing as a static revelation, if we mean by that a message once and for all delivered which we may receive without entering into life as life ought to be entered into. Even the historic life of Christ is incomplete, perplexing, and ineffectual in producing any saving or even satisfying faith except we may count on some other witness in the soul.

But this is not to say that there is any value at all in a confidence which rests on a purely natural, progressive unfolding of truth which comes through the processes of life themselves. Dean Inge is right in his claim that there are no words more disguising and evasive of life's real problem than the words " potentiality " and " continuity " which are so continually used to explain it.

There is need for revelation in history, and there is need for recurring revelation in every individual soul, if that soul is to know truth—God. Revelation in the individual's life is that light which breaks upon personal labour and patience, and courageous and obstinate adventure in the sphere of the Spirit, and which reveals itself in a knowledge ear-marked of God.

The passionate desire of Paul's whole ministry was that Christ might be formed in men, that they might be reproduced in His character. To accomplish this, they themselves must labour earnestly, with fear and trembling, to make their salvation sure, recognizing always, however, that it is God Himself Whose power effects within them the desire to do His pleasure, and to bring

to accomplishment this desire in their lives. There is present with those who labour in the establishing of Christ's Kingdom on earth a strangely active power, a discerner, a helper, a strengthener, something which makes us see the absolute reality of the things of Christ and the unreality of everything else. Paul called it the Holy Spirit.

THE END

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